CRITICS CHOICE MAGAZINE

THE X-MEN

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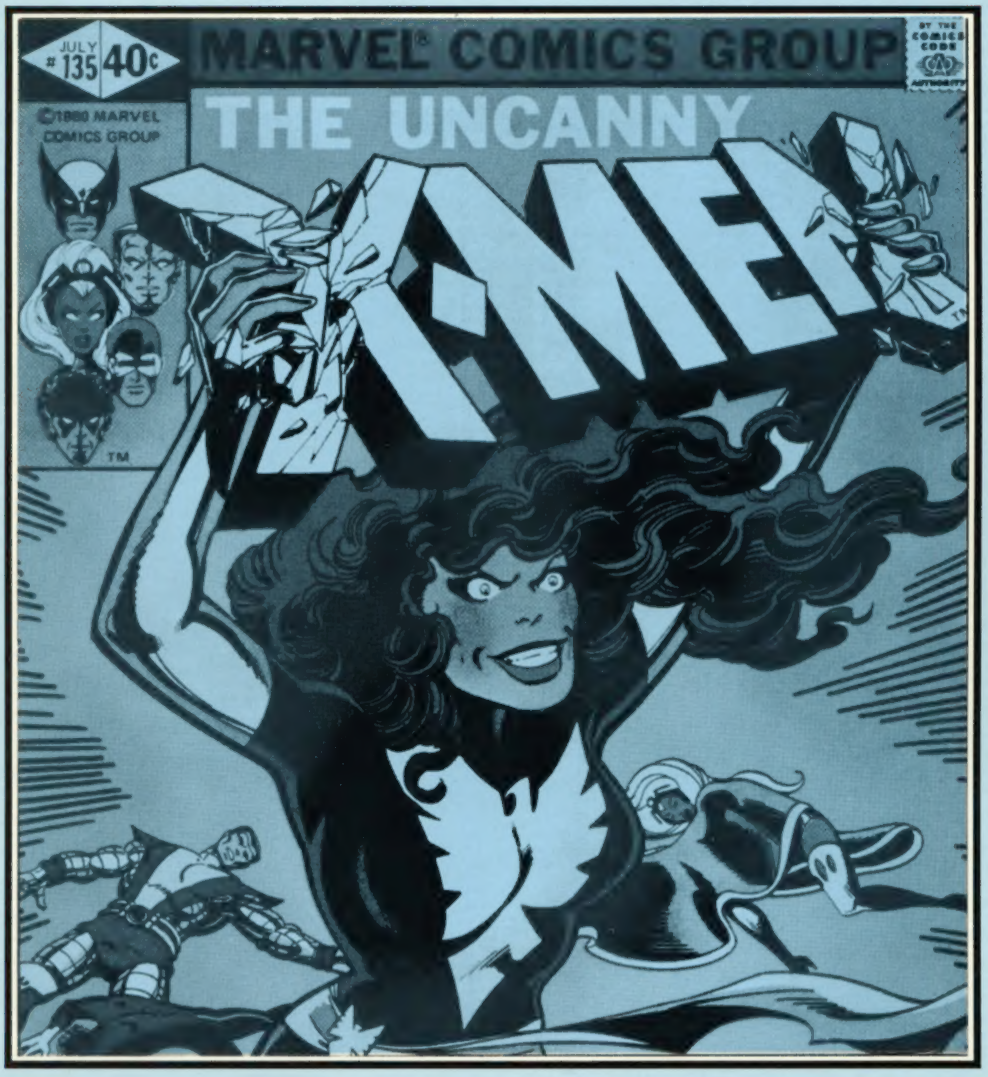

AN ANALYSIS OF ISSUES #129-#145

BY JAMES VAN HISE

CRITICS CHOICE MAGAZINE

THE X-MEN

EDITED AND DESIGNED
BY
BY HAL SCHUSTER

CRITICS CHOICE MAGAZINE

THE X-MEN

ISSUES #129-#145

BY JAMES VAN HISE

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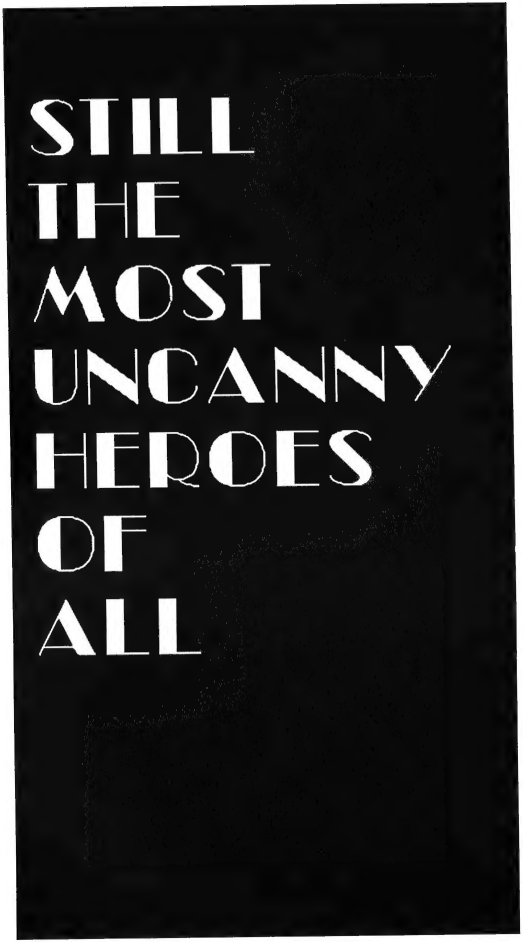
STILL
THE
MOST
UNCANNY
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ALL

ISSUES #129 TO #145

INTRODUCTION

What makes the X-Men unique? Why have they retained their status as the most popular characters in comic books? How can they support a title every week, soon to actually increase to more than one a week, and still top the charts in sales regularly?

Certainly the writing on the books has always maintained an overall unusually high level of quality. Chris Claremont and Louise Simonson are two of the best writers of comic books ever. They both have mastered their craft and put a lot of loving care into their work. Yet both have had titles cancelled out from under them, both have written books that could not even survive on the newsstands let alone top the bestseller lists.

The art in the books has always been competent and sometimes downright inspiring. Yet this is true of other books as well. It isn't hard to name any number of books with excellent work that have failed to achieve a high enough sales level to live.

Then what makes the X-Men unique? Why does the team inspire the devoted following that they do. And why do related books, titles in which the X-Men themselves only make infrequent appearances, also do so well?

The characters are interesting. So are those in any number of other books. And the X-Men team itself has changed characters any number of times. The line-up has been through freqent changes. None of the mainstay characters that launched the book are even on the team anymore. Some have died, some have retired from superheroics and others have moved on to other teams. The new X-Men related title, **X-calibur**, is planned to consist of all of the surviving mainstay X-Men characters. This will literally leave the original book with none of the characters

that made it popular. Yet the book will continue and perhaps even grow in popularity.

Perhaps the reason for the success of the book lies in three areas:
1) Persecution— virtually everyone at some time feels that the world is unfair to them, that they are being picked on and pointed out for bad treatment. The essence of the mutant in the Marvel universe has long been one to reflect this. Mutants are picked out as a group for special persecution and given treatment that is easily unconstitutional in our real world. This is easy for a reader to identify with, particular easy for many comic book fans.
2)Violence— this feeling of being treated unfairly with no real response mechanism leads to a state of repressed violence. One way to release this energy is to engage in the vicarious experience of watching one's heroes engage in a more physical response to pressures than seems available to the reader. The mutant books are particularly violent and in many ways launched the more violoent, darker, more sombre trend currently dominating comic books. Some years ago, in an interview with **Comics Feature** magazine, Chris Claremont pointed out that a superhero comic book could be just as violent and deadly to its protagonists as could a war comic book. At the time he said that it seemed unbelievable, revolutionary. Now it seems to be the standard. The more lyrical superhero tale typified in Silver Age DC comics, but also prevalent elsewhere, has almost disappeared.
3)Change—The very changes in story structure and main protagonists that would seem to place stress on the durability of the popularity of the X-Men related books has actually led to a greater popularity in many ways. Before a reader could tire of a story-

line or character, the book moved on to a new and interesting storyline or team lineup. Comic book publishers have longed faced the challenge of the twin gods of continuity and new titles. It is almost a given in the industry that the first few issues of a series will sell better than later issues. Each consecutive issue witnesses a falling off of readership. That is the reason why so many limited series have been launched recently, series designed to capture the higher sales of the initial issues and then be gone before the lower-selling issues would begin. Pulling away from this is the drawing power of existing characters and the ability of a book to develop a dedicated following. The dilemma facing publishers was how to capitalize on both trends. Just how do you create a long-standing, highly licensable property with strong public recognition and yet have it maximum sales of each issue? One answer utilized recently by many companies is to create a mini-series within the regular-running title. To have two sets of numbers on each book, one which designates its long-standing and reflects the total number of issues of that publication, and a larger one which indicates which issue within the story immediately being told it is. The X-Men books have, in effect, been doing the same thing, without the numbers, for years. Storylines and protagonists periodically change, in effect creating a new series within the existing title.

Perhaps these factors combine to create a publishing phenomenon, a mini-line within the larger line of Marvel Comics.

X-MEN 129
"God Spare The Child. . "

Writer/co-plotter:Chris Claremont
Penciller/co-plotter: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Bob Sharen
Editor: Roger Stern

In Scotland, the X-Men are preparing to return home. Their blackbird jet is fueled and ready and the group is saying their good-byes to Moira MacTaggert at her Muir Island Mutant Research Center.

Sean Cassidy (Banshee) has elected to remain behind with Moira. Since his sonic scream has not returned, he feels that he can no longer make a valuable contribution to the team. Plus, he is in love with Moira and he wants to remain with her and help her deal with the deaths of her son, Proteus, and of her estranged husband whom Proteus killed.

Cyclops offers Jamie Madrox, the Multiple Man, a slot in the X-Men, but he prefers the quiet life of Muir Island and the Research Center. Alex Summers and Lorna Dane also prefer to try to live their lives as normal human beings, but offer to help the X-Men whenever they need it.

The Blackbird takes off and heads west towards New York. Not far away is the corporate jet of the Hellfire Club. On board that jet is Jason Wyngarde, or at least that's what he calls himself now. He is using his mental powers to slowly but surely corrupt Jean Grey so that he can draw on the hidden dark side of her soul and make her the new Black Queen of the Hellfire Club. He is doing this by causing her to periodically experience vivid hallucination wherein she is in another time period with her lover —Jason Wyngarde. While she recognizes him and knows who he is, she doesn't understand how he keeps turning up in these vivid experiences. At first she thought they were brought on by the powers of Proteus, but now she knows that there must be some other reason.

When she emerges from the hallucination she finds herself with Scott. There is something that has been bothering him that he wants to talk about. It has to do with the recent time when he believed she was dead and yet he displayed no grief. He explains that if he had, the grief would have broken him. Scott tells her that until he'd believed that she was dead, and then discovered her alive again, that he never realized what saying "I love you" really meant. He takes her in his arms and they express how deep their affections are. They spend the rest of the flight back talking, feeling closer than they ever have before.

Cyclops lands the jet close to the house because their intruder alert has detected someone in the house. The X-Men burst in and find that it is Prof. X, returned from space. Each is happy to see the other, particularly since Xavier had believed that most of the X-Men were dead.

Jean agrees to stay at the school rather than at her apartment in the city, although she has devined that it is because Xavier wants to run some tests on her because he is uncertain that Jean can truly control the powers of Phoenix. Scott and Jean are returning to the mansion from a walk when they encounter Wolverine storming out of the Danger Room. He's just had a blow-up with Prof. X and he tells Scott in no uncertain terms that he won't be treated like a kid.

Scott tries talking to Xavier, explaining that these X-Men are not teenagers uncertain of how to cope with their powers but rather seasoned adults. They are different from the old X-Men and are a different kind of team. Xavier just feels that Scott has failed to mesh the X-Men into a proper team and makes it clear that he intends to succeed where Scott has failed.

When Xavier states that Wolverine's outburst will cost him ten demerits, Scott knows that Xavier just doesn't understand who he's dealing with these days.

When Cerebro detects two mutants with abilities previously unknown to its scanner, Prof. X tells Scott that their discussion will have to wait as he wants these checked out. But unknown to Xavier, the Hellfire Club is also tuned in to Cerebro, a fact which was accomplished by Warhawk when he invaded the school months before. Two of the members, Sebastian Shaw and Jason Wyngarde, discuss how to proceed and it is decided to send the White Queen to recruit the new mutants by hook or by crook.

In Deerfield, a suburb of Chicago, 13 year old Katherine Pryde is coming home. When she arrives she finds someone with her parents, a Ms. Frost who is there to represent a private school in Massachusetts. Kitty is home early because she's had another of a recurring series of headaches. When she goes upstairs to lie down, she thinks to herself that Ms. Frost was a bit creepy and looked at her in a manner that was distinctly predatory.

Kitty tries to sleep but then suddenly wakes up and finds herself on the living room floor, even though she'd gone to sleep upstairs in her bedroom. Startled, she runs back upstairs.

As Ms. Frost is leaving, Prof. X arrives at the house with Ororo, Logan and Peter. They meet Kitty's parents, who sit down to discuss business with Prof. X while she goes out to the Malt Shoppe with the other students.

Storm hits it off with Kitty quite well and tells her about the X-Men. Meanwhile, Logan is reading a copy of **Penthouse** when the store manager starts to hassle him. Logan is about to hassle him right back when three armed and armored figures crash through the store window and turn a flame-thrower on Peter, who manages to change to his armored form just in time to keep himself from being fried!

Logan attacks one of the other intruders but a force field fends off his deadly adamantium claws. When Wolverine is knocked backwards, he almost lands on Kitty who instinctively backs away and falls through the wall as though she were immaterial. The effort causes her to momentarily black out.

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The inevitable happens this issue. Banshee quits the X-Men. While he had still been fighting alongside the team for several issues, it was clear that his days with the team were numbered since his sonic scream was just not returning.

The return of Prof. X is interesting in that he at first is happy to find the X-Men all alive and well and then turns around and starts taking them for granted and becoming very authoritarian. In the months that Xavier has been off in space with Lilandra, the X-Men have matured as a team and suffered rigors as great or greater than anything that the original team went through. But Xavier still views these X-Men the way he did the original team that began as teenagers. In fact, looking back on issue 94 when the old team split up leaving the new team behind, one might even suspect that part of the reason may have been that they had outgrown the necessity of Xavier's guidance, but Prof. X refused to see this. Certainly he was shocked and upset when they left so abruptly and it could well be because he had just not perceived that he had not changed in the way he perceived them even though they had matured. Here we see Xavier slipping right back into his old role as though he had never left, overlooking the fact that they had barely survived a harrowing encounter with Magneto as well as other major conflicts. When Scott tries to explain this to him, Xavier treats him like he's just an obstinate brat.

This issue introduces us at last to the Hellfire Club and we learn much more about it, including the fact that they were behind the seemingly pointless attack by Warhawk back in issue #110 — and you thought it was a pointless fill-in issue! In one page we encounter Sebastian Shaw and the White Queen and learn that they have a tap on Cerebro so that they learn what it has to communicate just as soon as the X-Men do. Reflecting on this we can guess that the Hellfire Club knew all about the X-Men's brief tenure in Mesmero's circus! And then there's that initial glimpse we get of the White Queen in which she is garbed in one of the more revealing garments seen this side of Fredericks of Hollywood!

Kitty Pryde is portrayed as a typical 13 year old girl, albeit one whose mutant power is just beginning to manifest itself. That she is insightful is portrayed by the way she immediately picks up on the bad vibes from Ms. Frost.

"The return of Professor X is interesting ...Banshee quits..."

The scene in the malt shop at the bottom of page 19 is amusing for while the focus of attention is on Kitty and Ororo in the foreground, in the background we can see the shop keeper giving Wolverine a sour look for standing at the magazine counter and reading while Colossus looks somewhat amazed from his position where he's reading **Penthouse** by looking over Wolverine's head. I think we can safely assume that seeing such a magazine displayed publicly is a revelation in more ways than one to the young Russian. The scene has other little details, possibly added by the inker, such as crudely applied tape covering a tear in the seatcover that Ororo is sitting on.

The ruthlessness of the Hellfire Club is readily made apparent when the three heavily armored attackers attempt to kill, not just subdue, the X-Men. They want Kitty Pryde and they'll stop at nothing to see to it that Xavier's group does not secure her. That the Hellfire Club is well off financially is very clear by the technological sophistication of both the armored attackers and the vehicle which the captured X-Men are loaded into. The ruthlessness of the Hellfire Club is also made abundantly clear when the White Queen activates the self-destruct mechanisms in the armored suits when the three henchmen fail in their assignment. And into this demon's brew of danger has walked Kitty Pryde.

Speaking of Kitty Pryde, since her clothes are not made of that old Marvel standby "unstable molecules," how is it that when she phases through something, her clothes come with her? She should actually just phase right out of her clothes since whatever power affects her physical makeup would have no effect on her clothes. But then if we didn't had some doubletalk about an aura to fall back on, Kitty would have had more surprises than one when she phased through the wall and found herself outside on the ground!

X-MEN #130 "Dazzler"

Writer:Chris Claremont
Penciller/Co-Plotter:John Byrne
Inker:Terry Austin
Colorist:Glynis Wein
Editor:Roger Stern

Scott, Jean and Kurt have arrived at an address on Delano Street in lower Manhattan to check out the report of the other mutant detected by Cerebro. As they exit the Professor's Rolls Royce, they are under surveillance by the Hellfire Club whose computer immediately identifies the three as Cyclops, Phoenix and Nightcrawler.

Kurt remains outside while Scott and Jean enter the nightclub. When they see what the place looks like, Scott wonders if this is where old discos go to die. The place is bright and noisy and populated with the kind of people one doesn't see in the upscale dance clubs.

Scott is wearing a microcerebro on his wrist as he searches the confines of the club for the neo-mutant they expect to find there.

Across the street from the night club is a van from which some minions of the Hellfire Club are spying on the three X-Men and preparing to capture them. Back at the Hellfire Club itself they discuss the possibility of this happening and Jason Wyngarde says that he'll believe it when he sees it! But then while Sebastian Shaw find's Jason's plan to subvert Jean Grey interesting, Shaw will believe that when he sees it.

In Chicago, the Hellfire Club has captured Colossus, Wolverine, Storm and Prof. X. Xavier has been sedated while the others are in cages containing inhibitor fields to prevent them from using their powers. But unknown to Emma Frost and the others, Kitty Pryde has sneaked in and phased through walls to find her new friends. She furtively approaches Storm without being spotted and is able to help her snap out of her trance. Ororo slips Kitty a note with a private phone number to call and get help.

Just then Kitty is spotted and she runs, but not towards any doors. Then she suddenly dives through the floor and escapes her pursuers.

Back at the New York disco, Jean Grey is scanning the crowd, searching for the neo-mutant when suddenly she is approached by Jason Wyngarde. She slips into another vivid hallucination, this one involving her marrying Jason. After the minister pronounces them husband and wife, Jason removes Jean's bridal veil and reveals her to be the Black Queen. They then embrace and Jean suddenly comes back to reality and finds herself kissing Jason Wyngarde! Jean disengages and starts trying to explain what happened, even though she doesn't really understand it herself, when the star performer of the night is announced, a woman named Dazzler. She wears a skintight silver costume and is capable of creating a lightshow all around her. Scott has found their neo-mutant!

Outside in the Rolls, the phone rings and Nightcrawler answers it. On the other end is Kitty Pryde who desperately tries to explain that the Prof. and the other X-Men who went to Chicago have been captured, but before he can find out anything more, an armored attacker rips the door off the car and tries to kill Nightcrawler, who teleports away just in time. The attacker turns and points a weapon at Kurt which disorients him as his attacker starts walking up the wall after him.

Inside the disco, two more armored warriors of the Hellfire Club attack by crashing through a skylight. Phoenix immediately transforms into her X-Men garb and changes Scott into his with just a thought. They attack and Jean is momentarily disabled by a brainwave scrambling beam while the other shoots out something which covers Scott's head, thus blinding him and effectively neutralizing him. But then Dazzler joins the fray and uses her powers to knock out one of the armored warriors.

Freed from the disabling beam, Phoenix frees Scott and he uses his optic beams to knock out two of the attackers. Just then Nightcrawler falls through the already shattered skylight in the grip of another warrior, whom Phoenix quickly neutralizes.

Kurt delivers the news that the Prof. and the others have been captured in Chicago. Scott isn't certain whether to completely believe a call from a 13 year old girl.

Dazzler wants an explanation of what in the world has been going on and Scott explains to her that she's a mutant, and that's the source of her fantastic light powers.

Outside they get in the Rolls (which is missing a door but is otherwise in good shape) and drive off. Scott notices Jason Wyngarde standing in the street, but what he doesn't notice is that the headlights cause him to cas a shadow of someone who looks much different from

...son. As they drive off, Jason Wyngarde laughs out ...ud over his continuing plot to dominate Jean Grey.

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While this has been all but lost to posterity, **X-Men** #130 was supposed to be significant at the time because it introduced The Dazzler. This character with a ...ple angle followed the form in comics in that it was ...ing to tie into a fad that was already dying by late ... The direct market comic book sales marketplace ... just starting to really come into its own and the first ...ue of Dazzler was going to get a big promotional push ... Marvel to help launch successful non-returnable sales ... the book. Meetings were held with representatives of ... Direct Market distributors where they were told how ...t **Dazzler** was going to be (how many people even ...member that there was a **Dazzler** comic?). Since the ...aracter was supposed to be treated as important, ...rvel decided to have her introduced in X-Men prior to ... appearance of the first issue of her title. Reportedly ...ris Claremont wasn't thrilled with having to shoehorn ...s character into his continuity. In fact if you step back ...m issue #130 and look at it as a whole, it has essential... the same plot as issue #129, except that the X-Men ...en't captured at the end. Reading it over now, the is... actually holds up very well, certainly much better ...an the Dazzler comic book does. In light of the Dazz...'s recent entrance into the X-Men, it fits into the series ...ntinuity better than ever.

Dazzler actually isn't that bad a character although ... the time she seemed like a pretty thin excuse to cash ...n a craze.

This story features the same heavily armored war... we saw last issue, although they have yet to be ...ed anything. They wear battle armor specially equipt ...o take on certain of the X-Men, yet there is no special ...me or designation for this squad of men in pink armor. ...suppose you could call them the Suicide Squad since ...ey're blown up if they fail in their objective.

A little more is revealed about the Hellfire Club in ...is story, including what Sebastian Shaw looks like. We ...so that he and Jason Wyngarde seem to have a friend... rivalry going as each doubts the ability of the other to ...ull off his grandiose plans. Shaw intends to capture all ...f the X-Men while Wyngarde has a complicated ...cheme to subvert Jean Grey by bringing her dark side ...o the surface so that she will join the Hellfire Club of her ...wn free will and become the Black Queen by choice. ...We even see what the Black Queen will look like and ...it is definitely a side of Jean Grey we haven't seen be...fore.

Speaking of Jason Wyngarde, we are once again ...hown his shadow cast on a wall only this time it is much ...onger, and again it is clearly the silhouette of Master...mind for the old time fans to recognize.

And on the subject of recognition, at the top of ...page five we clearly see two patrons of the down and ...irty disco and one of them is The Joker (of Batman ...ame) with a safety pin through his nose! A punk Joker!

This issue we see where the captured X-Men have been taken and also discover to our surprise that Prof. X was captured as well...between the last issue and this one! How was he surprised? Was it before or after he left the home of Kitty Pryde's parents? And what's happened to her parents? After all, she's been gone at the "Mall Shoppe" an awfully long time!

"While it has been lost to posterity,X-Men #130 was supposed to be signifcant at the time because it introduced The Dazzler. The charac ter was trying to tie into a fad that was already dying by 1979..."

The power of Phoenix is displayed in a small way when she responds to the crisis by instantly transforming her and Scott's street clothes into their X-Men costumes. Even Scott is surprised.

XMEN#131 "Run For Your Life!"

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Penciller/Co-Plotter: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Roger Stern

Kitty Pryde is on the run, and the Hellfire Club is hot on her trail. Just when she thinks she's given them the slip, there they are right behind her again. The car containing the two henchmen who have spotted her is closing in as she fails. They think they've got her until Phoenix suddenly appears in front of the car. They try to run her down but instead crash into her as though hitting a brick wall.

Kitty is almost hysterical. She doesn't know who that woman is and to make matters worse a strange-looking character has just snatched her up and is carrying her up the side of a building. Scott runs up to Phoenix, and Dazzler is with him. He wants to know why Jean wrecked the car when he just wanted her to stop it. "You didn't feel the girl's stark terror, Scott, or the thoughts of the killers chasing her." She feels that those animals got no more than they deserved, which is to say that while they aren't dead, they aren't in tip-top health at the moment either.

Nightcrawler calls down to Cyclops from his vantage on the top of the building and Phoenix wraps Scott and Dazzler in a telekinetic energy field and flies all of them up to where Kurt is waiting. Apparently Kitty found her trip up the side of the building altogether too disturbing and she slipped away from Nightcrawler and used her power to phase through the floor and vanish inside the building.

Jean transforms into her civilian guise and enters the building, using her telepathic powers to home in on Kitty. Jean quietly explains that she's one of the X-Men that Kitty phoned, and after hesitating the girl collapses into Jean's arms.

Back aboard the X-Men's skyship, Scott bandages Kitty's cuts and scrapes while Dazzler wonders what she's gotten herself into. Since they've brought their prisoners aboard, Jean mind-scans them to learn what they're up against. She finds out about another telepath named Emma Frost and learns about the Hellfire Club, an organization which has also appeared in her hallucinations/flashbacks. Could Jason Wyngarde have something to do with it? She is confused and uncertain how much of what she's learned she should tell. She keeps the mention of Jason Wyngarde to herself.

An hour before dawn, a sleek Lincoln Continental pulls up to the main gate of Frost Enterprises. Inside the car are the two Hellfire Club henchmen, both conscious and seemingly in control of the situation. In the back seat of the car are four unconscious X-Men - Cyclops, Phoenix, Nightcrawler and Dazzler. The funny thing is, this is the same car that Phoenix destroyed the night before, but now it looks fine.

Emma Frost notes the arrival of the car from her vantage point in the lab where she is examining Storm with painful psychic probes.

Meanwhile, Kitty Pryde phases through the wall into the complex where Wolverine, Colossus and Xavier are still imprisoned. She gets Wolverine's cage open and pulls him out. Beyond the field of the cage, he starts coming to his senses as Kitty explains that she came there with the X-Men. But just then she's stunned from the blast of one of the guard's weapons. The guard instructs Logan to get back in his cage unless he wants some of the same. Wolverine's response is to extend his claws and state, "Sucker, you just made the biggest mistake of your life. And the last." We don't see what happens next, but we can imagine. . .

The car with the X-Men in it pulls up to the front of the administration building and they choose that moment to attack. Cyclops blasts open the top of the car and Dazzler uses her powers of converting all the sounds around her into light to dazzle the guards. Then they break into the complex and begin knocking out guards.

Emma Frost realizes what is happening and prepares to destroy Storm's mind before the X-Men can reach her lab. But she has reckoned without Phoenix who suddenly appears before the White Queen and challenges her to see how good she really is.

The X-Men continue their frontal attack, and knock out more guards until they reach Wolverine, Colossus and Kitty who have all gotten free. Kitty was stunned but has recovered.

Just then a guard attacks and Colossus barely changes to his armored form in time to withstand the blast. He moves in and knocks out the guard, who had made the mistake of referring to Colossus as a freak.

Phoenix and Emma Frost are having a battle royal in front of Storm, who has recovered and is amazed at the power Phoenix is displaying. When it appears that

Just then a guard attacks and Colossus barely changes to his armored form in time to withstand the blast. He moves in and knocks out the guard, who had made the mistake of referring to Colossus as a freak.

Phoenix and Emma Frost are having a battle royal in front of Storm, who has recovered and is amazed at the power Phoenix is displaying. When it appears that Phoenix is about to defeat the White Queen, Emma Frost channels her power into a telepathic psi-bolt and the result is that the lab explodes! Scott starts digging through the rubble, afraid that Jean is dead, but suddenly she bursts forth with Storm safely at her side. All we know of the fate of the White Queen is that she wasn't as lucky as Phoenix when it came to withstanding a collapsing building.

Suddenly Prof. X is with them. He has been holding back and observing the conflict and he's pleased in the way they handled themselves. He offers Dazzler the chance to join the X-Men but she turns him down as she feels that she's more cut out to be an entertainer than a warrior.

Outside Kitty's house, her parents come running up to them, frantic with worry because they knew that the Malt Shoppe had exploded. Her father starts getting into a heated argument with Xavier when suddenly his mood changes. Phoenix has altered the memories of Kitty's parents so that they are no longer concerned about where she's been or what happened. They're also very happy about Kitty attending the Professor's school.

Storm and Scott discuss this as they don't believe that Jean would have done anything like that before. Storm feels as though Jean is somehow being manipulated by someone. Scott thinks that maybe they're just imagining things.

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This is the issue which shows what Kitty Pryde is made of and why she deserves to be an X-Man. For several hours she has eluded pursuit by the henchmen of the HellFire Club, sleepless hours in which she'd been hounded and hunted, believing for a short time to be free only to be discovered again. Being hunted by men who want to imprison her is a startling new experience for a 13 year old girl. In this story we see Kitty pushed almost to the limit of human endurance only to bounce back again and help Wolverine escape when the other X-Men are making a frontal assault.

The transformation of Phoenix is becoming more apparent in the way she expresses herself through her powers. When two Hellfire thugs are about to capture Kitty, Phoenix appears in front of their car. When they try to run her over, she demolishes the car they're in and then casually defends it by saying, "You didn't feel the girl's stark terror, Scott, or the thoughts of the killers chasing her. I'm a telepath. I did. These...animals got no more than they deserved." But then she turns around and displays her human side when she assumes her civilian guise and goes into the warehouse to find Kitty Pryde, who fled there in terror after meeting Nightcrawler. That something is at work inside her is evident when she scans the mind of the captured Hellfire thug and encounters the name of the Hellfire Club, the same organization she'd encountered in her hallucination involving Jason Wyngarde. That she doesn't feel she can bring herself to mention it to Scott is a red flag that she is involuntarily suppressing the information. The one time we really see Dark Phoenix stretching into initial self-awareness is on page 17, panel 2 when Jean confronts Emma Frost, a telepath whose powers serve only the dark demands of the Hellfire Club. Their battle on pages 22 & 23 is just as Storm describes, both beautiful and terrible. The images of Phoenix surrounded by a huge bird formed of crackling, powerful energy are incredible to behold, particularly when they capture the White Queen in its unearthly grip.

"It's interesting that Prof. X is disturbed over using power against someone else's mind since he did that in X-Men #2..."

Phoenix also displays how the increasing power is corrupting her when she uses her ability to wipe the memory of Kitty's disappearance from her parents. When it is evident that her father is ready to call the police on Xavier and her mother is hysterical with worry, Phoenix takes it upon herself to alter their minds. Jean explains it away casually by saying that she just wanted to avoid a lot of grief for all concerned, which of course she did. But she still used her telekinetic powers against an innocent person's mind.without thinking of ricochet effects this could have, something which is explored in the Stephen King novel Firestarter wherein one of the characters has the power of mental domination.

It's interesting that Prof. X is disturbed over using power against someone else's mind since he did exactly that in X-Men #2 when he made The Vanisher forget how to use his power. While it can certainly be argued that The Vanisher is by no means an innocent person, it still means that Xavier used his power in exactly the fashion that humans fear mutants do—to dominate another person.

XMen#132 "And Hellfire Is Their

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Co-Plotter/Penciller: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Jim Salicrup

In New Mexico, the X-Men pay a visit to Warren Worthington III, also known as The Angel, a founding member of the group. Scott relates their recent problems with the Hellfire Club when several members of the X-Men were captured and had to be rescued. Scott is concerned because the Hellfire Club knows a great deal of inside information on the X-Men and he needs to figure out how they got it. Warren reveals that while he himself is a member of the Hellfire Club (he inherited membership from his parents), he's only been there once and didn't like it, and that was before he went public with his identity of The Angel. Scott explains that he brought the X-Men with him there to New Mexico to try to keep their foes off balance.

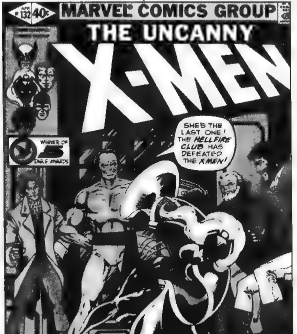
Just as Scott starts to explain that he feels that something odd has been happening to Jean lately, up she pops. Wanting to leave the two lovers alone, Warren flies off back to his house. Jean brought a picnic basket with her and as she spreads out a table cloth on the ground, she uses her power to change into a more casual attire. She can see that Scott is troubled and to relax him she startles him by pulling off his visor while using her powers to keep his optic blasts back. For the first time she is able to gaze into his eyes and see his face unobstructed by any sort of mask. All of Scott's recent concerns about Jean are forgotten once they embrace.

A week later, back in Manhattan, The Hellfire Club is having an exclusive party attended only by the rich and powerful. The Hellfire Club is located on Fifth Avenue, four blocks away from the Avengers mansion.

In the storm sewers beneath the exclusive club, Wolverine and Nightcrawler are making their way closer and closer. Logan notices some powerlines running along the tunnel and uses his claws to strip away the insulation. Since the water is slowly rising in the tunnel, the havoc caused upstairs when the cables short out might just be what they'll need later.

Around the corner from the club, Scott, Jean, Colossus and Storm are parked in a car and dressed to the nines so that they'll be able to crash the party and hopefully learn more about the mysterious Hellfire Club. They need to be certain that it's the same group that attacked them. Prof. X has remained in New Mexico with The Angel in reserve, should anything go wrong in Manhattan.

First Peter and Ororo enter the party and walk in unobserved. But when Scott and Jean enter, they are noticed on the monitor by Sebastian Shaw and the other members of the inner circle, Leland and Wyngarde. Shaw turns to Wyngarde and demands that he prove that his control over Jean is as strong as he claims. Moments later he appears on the dance floor and Jean experiences another hallucination.



But as Wyngarde starts leading Jean upstairs, Scott moves to interfere and Wyngarde taunts him as he walks up the stairs with Jean by revealing his true identity—that of the master of illusion Mastermind.

Scott runs up the stairs and rounds a corner only to be blasted by something. No, not just something but Jean Grey in yet another guise—The Black Queen. Mastermind has succeeded in dominating Jean and bringing forth her dark side.

Downstairs Peter and Ororo hear Scott's scream and recognize the sound of one of Jean's energy blasts. They transform themselves and race to the rescue, only to be confronted by Sebastian Shaw, a mutant who becomes stronger the more he is attacked. He engages Storm and Colossus in battle. In the basement, Nightcrawler and Wolverine emerge from the sewer, only to be attacked by Donald Pierce, a cyborg. While Pierce grabs Nightcrawler by the throat and immobilizes him, Harry Leland, another mutant, increases the mass of Wolverine until he crashes through the floor and back into the sewer, where he is seemingly swept away.

Upstairs, Shaw has defeated both Storm and Colossus and he gloats over his conquest with his fellow Hellfire Club members, including The Black Queen (Jean Grey).

But below them, in the swirling black waters of the sewer, Wolverine emerges, stating, "Okay, suckers--you've taken yer best shot! Now it's my turn!"

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A lot happens in this issue.
First we meet the rest of the mysterious inner circle

of the Hellfire Club. Besides Sebastian Shaw, there is Harry Leland. Leland is drawn by Byrne to be a ringer for Orson Welles. In fact, Leland is the name of the best friend of Charles Foster Kane in Welles' classic ***Citizen Kane***. There is also one Donald Pierce, a cyborg, although his other talents are not enumerated this time out. That Wolverine is more than willing to attack with maiming force is quite evident when his claws slice into Pierce's robot arm, revealing it for what it is.

And if there's any doubt who Leland is supposed to look like, panel 6 on page 22 is an obvious photoswipe of a bearded Orson Welles.

We meet The Angel again for the first time in many months. He quit the X-Men back in issue #94 although duplicates of him have turned up in stories from time to time. Here we see that he's safely ensconced in New Mexico with a lady friend, Candy Southern. (That name is an obvious reference to author Terry Southern, who wrote a book entitled **Candy In the Sixties**. The book was even made into a film.) This is a Warren Worthington who is quite comfortable with himself, as well as with his image since he had previously gone public with his mutant identity.

The tug and pull between Prof. X and Cyclops is evident again in this story, but on a more subdued level. Prof. X believes that Scott has been lax in his whipping the team into shape as a team while Cyclops has tried to explain that these are different people and cannot be treated like the teenagers that the original X-Men were. This time we see that Scott, after helping to rescue Prof. X in Chicago, went against his wishes and brought the whole group down to New Mexico. Scott's reasoning is quite sound, though, since he's quite adequately figured out that someone has penetrated the security at Prof. X's School for Gifted Youngsters. Scott has also stopped trying to consult with Xavier and is handling things on his own.

From The Angel's surprising revelation that he, too, is in the Hellfire Club, we can surmise that the organization is legitimate on many levels but that it has an inner circle which uses the rest as a front to carry out its nefarious schemes.

Jean once more casually reveals just how incredible her powers are when she shows that she can mentally restrain Scott's optic blasts so that they can kiss and cuddle like any normal human lovers. That would be the last time they shared a peaceful moment together for soon Jean would become Dark Phoenix.

Jason Wyngarde (in reality Mastermind) had been insinuating himself into Jean's consciousness and playing with the dark side of her human nature that she always kept buried. He succeeded in coaxing it to the surface, but always with himself in control. When Mastermind exerted his control over her fully, she flip-flopped and became the Black Queen, someone who was completely aligned with the Hellfire Club and who actually struck down her former lover, Scott Summers. But then the Black Queen is a different personality from Jean Grey as Mastermind actually managed to make her schizophrenic, creating a second, and for the moment, dominant personality. It would prove to be his undoing.

This story reveals Jason Wyngarde's true identity to be that of Mastermind, an X-Men foe who first appeared way back in **X-Men** #4. He was a member of the original Brotherhood of Evil Mutants under the leadership of Magneto and his identity was hinted at in previous stories when Jason Wyngarde's silhouette was clearly that of the ugly Mastermind (for those of us who even remembered Mastermind, that is).

"This story reveals Jason Wyngate's true identity to be that of Mastermind..."

Here we learn for the first time that the other members of the inner circle of the Hellfire Club are also mutants with powers as unique as the X-Men's own. I guess it's supposed to amuse us that fat Harry Leland has the power to make others heavier.

The final page of this story is classic as we see the Black Queen being toasted at the top of the page while the panels below (which also represent that this is taking place beneath the feet of the celebrants) show Wolverine rising from the sewer and swearing bloody vengeance.

XMEN#133 "Wolverine: Alone?"

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Penciller/Co-Plotter: John Burne
Inker: Terry Austin

In a sub-basement of the Hellfire Club, Wolverine is hiding on the ceiling while uniformed men search to make sure that the mutant didn't come back. But a tell-tale drip of water gives Logan's position away and he's forced to attack. One by one Wolverine takes out the armed killers until only one is left. Logan intimidates the man into dropping his weapon, and then uses threats of what he can do to learn as much information from the man as possible.

Upstairs the inner circle of the Hellfire Club gloats over its captives, who are held helpless by inhibitor fields built into their manacles. Among the gloating watchers is The Black Queen, who until just a few hours before had been Jean Grey—The Phoenix. But now Jean is under the thrall of Jason Wyngarde and believes herself to be his wife.

When the captive X-Men attempt to communicate with Jean, all she sees are renegade servants and believes herself to be living in a time a hundred years past. Scott is particularly immobilized in a ruby quartz helmet. But his mind is not immobilized and he still believes that he has the permanent psychic bond with Jean that she had only just established with him days before.

Nightcrawler inquires just why they're all still alive and Shaw casually explains that the X-Men will be used for experimental purposes to attempt to unlock the genetic key that creates mutants, so that the Hellfire Club will learn how to create mutant-powered individuals for their own purposes.

Over on Muir Isle near Scotland, Moira MacTaggert has made an unsettling discovery that she shares with Sean Cassidy (formerly The Banshee). She's determined that when Jean Grey reached her full potential as Phoenix, she set up psychic circuit breakers to prevent that power from getting out of hand because it was too much for her to handle. But someone has been gradually removing those breakers until now there are very few left. They pray that the result will not be a disaster.

In New Mexico, The Angel converses with Prof. X, who is concerned because he cannot establish his psychic link with the X-Men. He realizes now that although he had trained Cyclops to replace him as team leader that when the time came he had resented it and now fears that this resentment may have caused him to make some serious mistakes.

Back at the Hellfire Club, Wolverine has made his way upstairs via the dumbwaiter, but it only goes as far as the dance floor level. Before Logan can decide what to do next, that decision is taken out of his hands when a guard presses a gun to Wolverine's head.

Meanwhile, Cyclops is attempting to reach Jean through their psychic link and hopefully shatter the timeslip illusion that Mastermind has planted. Instead, he gets into a mental duel with Jason Wyngarde, represented by both men fighting with swords.

Wolverine responds to the guard by grabbing his gun hand and hurling him into the crowd. But when Logan tries to run through he is attacked by guards whom he can't be sure are ordinary guards or of the killer elite. Refusing to use his claws against them, Logan goes down under a hail of club blows.

Upstairs, Cyclops isn't faring much better when on the mental plane Jason Wynguard seemingly stabs Scott through the heart, and he collapses, apparently dead.

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By this time in the series, Wolverine had clearly emerged as the most popular individual X-Man. This issue is virtually a spotlight on Wolverine, although not entirely a solo adventure since there is a lot of cross-cutting to the other X-Men and their own personal duels with the Hellfire Club. But Wolverine is definitely on his own against the killer elite of the Hellfire Club and handles himself well. Once again we're shown him savagely attacking his opponents although exactly how savagely we can't be certain. On page 2, panel 4, in a panel colored completely in red (A bloody hint, perhaps?) we see the attack on the guard from behind and while the angle obscures most of the strike, it looks as though his adamantium claws are ripping open the man's chest! In panel one of page 3, a strike is shown from another angle although it too is obscured. This panel is also color

...ly in red. When Wolverine plays dead after being shot ...th some sort of energy weapon, a guard suggests that ...e "little runt is dead." Wolverine suddenly leans up in a ...ious attack, proclaiming, "Your mistake, bub. The ...le runt' lives! Which is more'n I can say for you." Need I ...d that the panel is tinted red? It's only because there ...s no other X-Men with him that we lack that third party ...w of the carnage, and their comments on same.

And yet, it's more interesting when we see Wolverine ...tually browbeat an armed opponent into surrendering ...ithout a fight. Panel 5 on page 6 shows that a masked ...aracter (in this case the intimidated henchman) can ...e portrayed withintense emotion, in this case fear, ...en through a mask. The rendering of this frightened ...an being faced down by Wolverine is excellent.

As if this isn't enough confrontation for one issue, we ...e Jean Grey become the Black Queen as Jason Wyn...rde extends his domination to finally transform her into ...s brutal personality. What this seems to hinge on, ...ough, is convincing her that she is not Jean Grey but ...ther an ancestor in a time about a 150 years ago. Thus ...e sees herself as someone else entirely—as a woman ...no is married to an ancestor of Wyngarde's, and one ...no owns slaves. Her confrontation with Storm, whom ...e views as a slave who has betrayed Jean's trust, is chill..., powerful and brutal. That the domination is com...ete seems to be portrayed by the fact that when Scott ...rifles Wyngarde on the psychic level, Jean is there at ...son's side as the dutiful wife; she does not recognize ...ott at all, reacting only with triumph when Jason ...ems to slay her lover.

That there is more to Jean's transformation than just ...yngarde's mental domination is underscored by the ...ene with Moira MacTaggert when she reveals that by ...moving the psychic dampers Jean had instinctively er...ched, something very dangerous could be unleashed. ...is turns out to be tragically prophetic.

During the hallucination sequence in which Scott ap...ars in period clothes, he wears a hat which casts a ...erpetual shadow across his. face. This could be be...use of how things function on the psychic plane for if ...ott's eyes were clear, he could theoretically use some...ing approximating his optic blasts since it would be a ...flection of reality and not just wishful invention. This as...ect is not explored here, although it does give a strange ...eling to the sword fight and underscores the fact that ...ott is more than he appears to be here as well as em...asizing that he is still a prisoner even in the midst of ...ome.

To show how far the comics code has come, while ...e battles Wolverine has early in this issue are pretty vio...nt, they're nothing when compared with the "death scene" of Scott on page 27. We actually see the sword protruding from his back. While it is an "imaginary" sword, the violence and impact are not lessened. On a lighter side, the cover of #132 has the signature of Byrne and Austin on a crate, and under their names it states: "WE DELIVER!".

"This issue is virtually a spotlight on Wolverine."

"We see Wolverine actually browbeat an armed opponent into surrendering without a fight..."

XMEN#134 "Too Late, The Heroes!" !

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Co-Plotter/Penciller: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Bob Sharen
Editor: Jim Salicrup

Cyclops staggers to his feet. The shock of his psychic "death" almost finished his physical body, but he survived.

Suddenly Wolverine bursts into the room where the Hellfire Club is holding the X-Men prisoner. Logan is dragging two guards with him who have been hanging on and trying to slow him down. Shaw is shocked and outraged as he had been assured that Wolverine was dead.

Wyngarde orders the Black Queen to stop Wolverine, and she obediently complies. Jean stops Wolverine but also inexplicably reopens her psychic rapport with Cyclops, freeing him. He blasts off the ruby quartz helmet which hits the cyborg, Pierce, knocking him out. Scott then turns and frees his fellow prisoners. Although still with hands bound, Cyclops turns his power against Leland, blasting him through the wall.

It turns out that Jean only appeared to attack Wolverine as she now releases him and commands him to do what he must.

Shaw prepares to take on Cyclops, believing that he is immune to those energy bursts, but instead of hitting him, Scott blasts the floor and Shaw falls through.

Pierce regains his feet and attacks Colossus, using the moment to escape through the hole in the floor. Storm pursues him.

Wyngarde realizes he underestimated the X-Men in his eagerness to topple Shaw from his position as head of the Hellfire Club. He now chooses to hang back, creating an illusion that he's part of the wall so that he can wait and see what happens next.

While Wolverine attacks Leland upstairs, Nightcrawler and Storm take on Shaw downstairs.

At the Avengers Mansion, The Beast is on watch when a summons comes in announcing that the X-Men are attacking the Hellfire Club. Rather than summoning the other Avengers in town, The Beast chooses to investigate this on his own.

The Cyborg Pierce is trying to out-muscle Colossus, but the result is that one of the cyborg's arms shatters. Outraged, he uses the live wires in it to temporarily blind Colossus and make good his escape.

THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
THE HELLFIRE CLUB HAS TRANSFORMED PHOENIX INTO THEIR BLACK QUEEN! ARE THE X-MEN TOO LATE TO SAVE HER?...OR, HEROES?!
HEROES AND HELLFIRE

Shaw gets the upper hand with Nightcrawler and hurls him at Storm, who has created bitter cold around Shaw and severely weakened him. He slips into a secret passage and encounters Pierce, who is shocked that they could have been beaten. Shaw announces that they'll learn from their mistakes that night and the next time will be different.

The rising water in the sewer finally reaches the cable from which Wolverine had shredded the insulation . This causes the Hellfire Club to be plunged into darkness.

Cyclops encounters Wolverine in the dark. When Scott asks what happened in his fight with Harry Leland, Wolverine replies, "Don't ask."

In the darkened upstairs room where they had been held prisoner, Jean Grey stands in the shadows and observes Jason Wyngarde. She understands now what has happened to her, and who is responsible. She knows she will enjoy what she does to him, and that pains her. She is two women in one now—Jean Grey and the Black Queen, but she will never be anyone's obedient servant again. She regained her senses when Wyngarde seemed to slay Scott Summers on the astral plane. Seeing him die was the shock that undid Wyngarde's work, or at least severed his control over her.

Jean knocks Wyngarde against the wall and holds him there with her power, helpless. She wrests the secret of his control over her—a mindtap device engineered by another telepath, the White Queen, which allowed Wyngarde to project his illusions directly into Jean's mind. It also enabled him to tap into the repressed dark side of her soul. She repays him by forcing his mind to experience all of the truth in the universe instantly, experiencing more than any normal mind could ever cope with. Mastermind lapses into a catatonic state.

Scott encounters Jean just as she detects the building being surrounded by police. They know they must escape because the Hellfire Club has the clout to make any charges they level stick. As they flee, Shaw watches them, vowing to make sure that the X-Men will become known throughout the world as public enemy number one.

Scott presses a control stud on his wristwatch and the X-Men's skycraft rises from where it was hidden in the Central Park reservoir. As they get into the craft

and escape, Jean reads Scott's troubled thoughts, his worry for her, but Jean believes that it is now too late for them, and for everything.

Wolverine notes all the police cars surrounding the Hellfire Club. Just then from the back of the craft they hear a voice challenging them. It is Jean Grey who has once more transformed. Not the Black Queen and not just Phoenix, she has become a synthesis of them both. She is Dark Phoenix.

An explosion rocks the X-Men's skycraft. An explosion of mutant power.

....

The climax of the first confrontation with the Hellfire Club and the birth of Dark Phoenix, destined to become one of Marvel's most controversial characters.

Just as Wyngarde's control of Phoenix insured his defeat of the X-Men, it is his overconfidence that brings about his defeat when he seemingly kills Jean's lover right before her eyes and doesn't anticipate what this could bring about. While we are at first puzzled and then surprised by the result, looking back at the earlier pages in this issue we can see clues. On page one, her expression is not haughty and commanding, but rather disturbed and uncertain. We can tell by the placement of the other members of the Hellfire Club that none of them happen to be looking at her at this moment. In panel 1 on page 3, Jean is described as looking "strangely somber," and the caption states: "Jean Grey slowly, deliberately looks from face to face—her gaze lingering on Wyngarde's, lingering far longer on Cyclops'." When Jean reveals herself to be back in control of her own mind, it is a heroic moment, one that doesn't hint at the dark consequences to come.

Speaking of dark consequences, Wolverine is at it again this time when he takes on Harry Leland, the mutant who increased Logan's weight two issues ago and sent him plummeting back into the sewer. When Wolverine leaps towards Leland, the man instinctively increases Wolverine's mass, which is a big mistake since Logan is falling towards Leland with his claws extended. The long shot we're presented with of their collision on page 11 in panel 3 tends to obscure what is really happening. The previous panel shows Wolverine only a couple feet away with claws fully extended while the next panel shows Wolverine slamming into Leland with his left arm against Harry's throat. The only clue we get to what happened is when Scott later inquires, to which Wolverine replies, "Don't ask." There's an awful lot of implication in these issues that Wolverine committed murder and mayhem, but all concerned shy away from outright admission. They apparently felt it was safer to just leave it up to the reader to decide what really happened.

The one page sequence with The Beast is interesting in that it begins on a light note (he's reading a book entitled **The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind** by Julian Jaynes, and is thinking to himself, "Good book—can't wait to see the movie.") when it switches tone. The NYPD alert about the X-Men trashing the Hellfire Club comes over the wire, but The Beast refuses to believe they're at fault—so he erases the tape of the alert and then just leaves. The implication is that he'd sooner quit the Avengers than turn on his only real friends. The fight between Colossus and Pierce is quite powerful, particularly on page 15 when Peter actually breaks one of Pierce's mutant arms. Looking at it, one can easily imagine it being bone and sinew and not just metal. After all, if Peter can do that to a mechanical arm, what might he do if he ever turned on a normal non-superpowered human being?

"The scene when Phoenix finally turns against Wyngarde... and uses her power is quite chilling..."

The scene when Phoenix finally turns against Wyngarde and uses her power against him is quite chilling as it emphasizes the fact that she understands that she has been corrupted and that she is beyond redemption. The face of Phoenix in panel 5 of page 22 is not the Jean Grey readers have known since issue #1—rather this is a woman whose dark side has taken over and who is fighting a losing battle to balance that by her basic goodness. That face is the face of the White Queen, the evil telepath that Jean had only just recently defeated, but who did not have power as strong as that of Phoenix to carry out her malevolent designs. This is one of those stories where just when you're breathing a sigh of relief that everyone has escaped, the unthinkable happens. In this case the unthinkable is betrayal from within; the next stage is set to begin in the now-notorious Dark Phoenix saga, whose final outcome not even Chris Claremont could have imagined.

XMEN#135 "Dark Phoenix"

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Co-Plotter/Penciller: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Bob Sharen
Editor: Jim Salicrup

Phoenix has inexplicably undergone a transformation and blown up the X-Men's sky craft while they were airborne a thousand feet above Central Park. Colossus and Nightcrawler are able to land safely on their own since the fall can't harm Peter and Kurt is able to teleport down. Storm grabs Wolverine and then swings over so that Wolverine can grab Cyclops and get him out of the reach of Phoenix. They don't know what's the matter with her or what else she may be capable of.

Phoenix flies down, proclaiming that escaping from her won't be that easy. When Scott demands, "For Pity's sake, Jean—why?!" she replies, "Ask not for pity from Dark Phoenix, my love. There is none in her."

Jean is using her power as an emotional/physical stimulant. She likes the way the power makes her feel.

Colossus lifts a tree in an attempt to tangle her in the branches, but Dark Phoenix telekinetically transforms him back to his human form, where it is impossible for him to support the tree. When Wolverine tries to help, Jean transmutes the tree into solid gold.

When Storm appeals to her as a friend, Jean replies that Dark Phoenix has no friends, and attacks her. It's impossible for them to attack her because she can read their thoughts and know their plans as quickly as they make them.

By striking down her friends, Dark Phoenix is cutting herself free of the last ties binding her to the person she was.

Through the psychic rapport Scott shares with Jean, he can see black flames consuming her soul, as though she is lost and drowning, as though Jean Grey is being consumed by Dark Phoenix.

For a moment Jean Grey realizes what is happening to her and experiences grief, but then Dark Phoenix is back. She reaches towards the sky, summoning lighting as she proclaims that she is quits with the X-Men and that her destiny lies in the stars.

Near Central Park the police are at the Hellfire Club, conversing with Sebastian Shaw. Jason Wyngarde and Harry Leland have been taken off in ambulances for immediate hospitalization. So far as the police know, the X-Men broke into the Hellfire Club during a party and trashed the place, escaping into Central Park just before the police arrived. The police won't tackle the X-Men on their own and suggest calling in the Avengers or SHIELD. Shaw is with his friend, Senator Robert Kelly, and suggests to Kelly that the government should become involved, and use the Sentinels.

Just then they see lightning building in intensity over the park, and that power suddenly transforms into the image of a giant phoenix. In the Baxter Building, Reed Richards registers an energy reading originating from someone with power enough to rival Galactus. Spider-Man's spider-sense went wild as soon as the Phoenix image appeared. Dr. Strange senses the power as does the Silver Surfer, who also recognizes the flawed human side that could destroy her.

Dark Phoenix soars spaceward just as the Beast arrives in Central Park in the Avengers quinjet. He lands and finds the ground still charred and smoking. The Beast finds Scott, stunned, and then lifts the gold tree from the trapped Colossus and Wolverine. The Beast helps the X-Men aboard the quinjet and then pilots it out of the park.

In New Mexico, Prof. X is still with the Angel. He's talking with Moira MacTaggert on the visaphone. Xavier had felt the burst of psionic energy and Moira confirms that Jean was the source. MacTaggert believes that Phoenix may be out of control. Xavier decides he must return to New York immediately as he knows now that the worst has happened.

Dark Phoenix races through our solar system, then creates a star gate which hurls her into another galaxy entirely. Needing more power, she dives into a star absorbing the power and causing the sun to go nova, consuming any inhabited planet. This is detected by a Shi'ar starship and upon magnification, they see Dark Phoenix. The vessel attacks her and she responds first wounding the craft and then destroying it. By this time Lilandra, the queen, has been contacted. She witnesses the death of the vessel and sees the image of Phoenix flaring on the screen. Lilandra knows what this means. She also realizes that it must be dealt with, once and for all.

At Prof. X's School for Gifted Youngsters, Scott is brooding over what happened. Wolverine has accepted what's happened and that a rematch would be pointless. Phoenix defeated them all easily. Just then Scott sits up, startled. Through the psionic rapport he

shares with Jean, he has detected her return to Earth, and her hunger.

****

This is the crucial issue which caused arguments after it was published. While Claremont and Byrne had intended to have Jean "cured" so that she could never become Dark Phoenix again, Editor-In-Chief Jim Shooter said that this wasn't enough. Because she had caused an entire inhabited planet to be destroyed, as well as the crew of the Shi'ar starship whom she attacked outright (albeit in self-defense since they had quite correctly decided that she was a menace), Jean Grey had to die. But when this issue was written and drawn, those weren't the plans.

Other Marvel writers later played around with events in this story such as when Bill Mantlo established (in an issue of **Rom**) that the asparagus people (borrowed by Byrne from an old Stan Lee story) had all been possessed by Dire Wraiths and were a doomed people anyway. This of course doesn't get around the starship Phoenix destroyed. She may have acted in self-defense but it was self-defense in avoiding a punishment that she deserved.

The scenes of Dark Phoenix soaring through space are quite impressive, in particular the destruction of the world of the asparagus people as well as that of the alien starship. The Shi'ar have always been interesting, ever since they were first introduced by Claremont and Cockrum. The destruction of the starship as seen by Queen Lilandra on page 27 brings to mind a very similar scene in the ***Star Trek*** episode "Balance of Terror" when Kirk and company establish contact with a starbase which has just suffered severe damage from an attack and then the viewscreen shows the base's point-of-view shot of the return engagement when the Romulan bird of prey appears on the screen and destroys the starbase in an almost blinding burst of energy. This effect is duplicated in panels 2 and 3 on page 27.

While at the time it happens it seems that using Lilandra is just convenient because she had been appearing in subplots every now and then for quite awhile, her appearance here marks a crucial turning point in the Dark Phoenix saga as it sets up the inescapable events to come.

The extent of the powers of Dark Phoenix on a terrestrial level are delineated quite well in her battle with the X-Men when it is evident that no one can stand against her. Not only is she able to read everyone's thoughts and know instantly what they plan to do, but for sheer power she is unstopp- able. None of the X-Men can even get close to her, and when Storm uses her elemental powers against her, Jean easily turns them right back at her. That she doesn't kill any of the X-Men may only be because of the remnant of Jean Grey's persona that remains, although what she does to Colossus and Wolverine certainly could have caused their demise since Colossus was holding up a tree when she used her super-telekinetic power to change him back to human form, and when Wolverine tried to help, she makes certain that's impossible by turning the tree into gold, which is quite dense and quite heavy when it's that big. This is one of the few times, though, when we see Wolverine beaten and he doesn't try to exact revenge. While it isn't brought out, he was once carrying a torch for her, and may still be if the truth be known. Wolverine is also smart enough to know when he's batting out of his league, and as Mr. Fantastic points out to Ben Grimm on page 14, the only person who may be in her league now is Galactus!

"This is the crucial issue which caused arguments after it was published..."

This issue is also a turning point for The Beast. When the police call comes in for the Avengers asking for help against the X-Men, he makes a moral choice on the side of his oldest friends. He erases the call from the log and then walks out to help the X-Men. The Beast arrives in Central Park just in time to shuttle them away in the quinjet before the battered team can be found by any annoyed authorities.

The ending of this issue is similar to the conclusion of #134. The previous issue ended with Dark Phoenix making her threatening appearance before the X-Men. This one ends with the knowledge that she's coming back, and has the power and the ability to destroy the Earth.

XMEN#136 "Child of Light and Darkness!"

Writer/co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Co-Plotter/Penciller: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein

At Imperial Center, ruling seat of a galactic empire many light years distant from Earth, the Grand Council has been called into an emergency session. Subject of the session: The Phoenix Entity. Lilandra, ruler of the Shi'ar, addresses the council and states that Phoenix may pose a threat even greater than that of Galactus. Although, with the X-Men, Phoenix previously helped to save the universe and defeat Lilandra's mad brother, Jean Grey now poses a threat that can only be eliminated if Phoenix is destroyed.

On Earth, Phoenix is detected approaching the planet and the President of the United States contacts the Avengers. But the only person on monitor duty is the butler, Jarvis. The Beast had been on duty but had left when he learned that the X-Men were in trouble.

At Prof. Xavier's school for Gifted Youngsters, The Beast is helping his friends and has constructed a Mnemonic Scrambler, a helmet which, if placed on Jean's head, would prevent her from exercising her telekinetic powers.

Storm recognizes that Cyclops is undergoing a great deal of personal turmoil but he resists her offer to try to talk with him, to comfort him, because Scott knows that if he gives in to his feelings that he'll shatter.

Colossus, Nightcrawler and Wolverine are working out in the Danger Room. The exercise is intense, but afterwards they don't feel any better, still worried about what will happen when Phoenix returns and if there is any way to help her.

When she lands on Earth, Jean returns to her parents home. Jean feels overwhelmed by her parents thoughts. She feels not just their love, but on a basic, unconscious level, fear of her as well. Finally the power of Dark Phoenix causes her to respond to those feelings and threaten her parents. Her father responds angrily by denying that she could be his daughter. But just as Dark Phoenix is thinking about responding to that verbal attack, she notices a fog around the house and instantly realizes that it can't be natural.

Phoenix flies out of the house and Nightcrawler immediately appears above her and slips the Mnemonic Scrambler over her head, disorienting her. But she can still fight back, first striking down Colossus and then Storm. When the Beast grabs her hands, he recognizes that Jean is fighting the scrambler's effects and burning it out. Wolverine attacks her, realizing that they can't hold back if they want to defeat her. She's Dark Phoenix now, not Jean Grey any more. But as Wolverine prepares to finish her off with his claws, the scrambler allows Jean's personality to show through momentarily. She says, "Strike! While the human part of me is still in control. Finish me with your claws, I beg you...I don't want to—" But she does hurt him, lashing out with the powers of Dark Phoenix as Wolverine hesitates and the scrambler finally burns out. They've had their shot.

With a thought she freezes the X-Men where they stand, as stiff and helpless as statues. She taunts them, and when Colossus pleads to anything human that remains in her, she says nothing human remains. But then the X-Man who was not a part of the fight appears nearby. Cyclops.

Scott says that he came to talk, but she says she won't listen. He asks her why she has fought them, but not killed them. Scott talks to her, convincing her that the love that Jean Grey holds for the X-Men is too fundamental a part of her to be exorcised. He breaks through. Dark Phoenix is confused but is listening to what Scott has to say, understanding it, when suddenly she is attacked!

Prof. X has used Scott's talking as a diversion and struck at her mentally. Dark Phoenix strikes back, but Xavier is determined to end what he feels responsible for, even if it costs him his life. The psi-war with Dark Phoenix begins. It's the telepath Jean Grey versus her teacher. Xavier is battling to re-erect the wall of psionic circuit-breakers. The mental battle is violent, but suddenly the Phoenix effect which had been lighting up the countryside ends as Xavier wins; but he knows that was because Jean Grey's innermost self was helping him.

Scott runs to her and takes Jean in his arms. She's back. Dark Phoenix has disappeared, along with all vestiges of her attire. Jean's parents are there with a robe to cover her. The Angel is also there as he had flown Xavier up there.

Jean seems to be cured and happiness has been r

stored. But then there is a flash and the X-Men are gone with only Jean's parents standing there wondering what in the world has happened.

This issue presents both the tragedy and the triumph of Dark Phoenix. In the depths of space we see her inhuman side, while on Earth her friends fight to find what humanity they pray still lives within her. While Xavier is on Earth attempting to deal with what his former student has become, ironically it's Xavier's lover, Lilandra, halfway across the known universe in another galaxy who is deciding Jean Grey's fate. Because Dark Phoenix emerged from her self-generated stargate into that galaxy and destroyed a system and its inhabited planets, Phoenix has come under Lilandra's jurisdiction. Careful reading of this section notes that when D'Bari, a main sequence G-type star, was advanced to the super-nova stage, it destroyed both the star and its inhabited planets. So more than one inhabited world was destroyed, not just the planet of the asparagus people whom Bill Mantlo later decreed had been inhabited by Dire Wraiths. But what about other inhabited worlds in that solar system? Dark Phoenix is still apparently responsible for the death of millions, as well as for one battle cruiser and its valiant crew.

Lilandra states her opinion that Phoenix may pose a threat greater than that of Galactus because while he just consumes planets, Phoenix consumes stars and in turn brings about the destruction of entire planetary systems. One wonders what would have happened had Dark Phoenix ever encountered Galactus as he has a purpose behind his existence while Dark Phoenix is just a force of evil embodied in human form. Lilandra apparently has far reaching authority in her position as she can make decisions regarding the inhabitants of worlds in another galaxy. She passes judgment on an Earth woman, Jean Grey and at a later date arrives at a decision affecting the life of another citizen of Earth--Reed Richards. It seems that if someone does something which can or does have an impact on her region of the universe, Lilandra won't hesitate to act.

The consequences of The Beast's walking out on the Avengers are first felt this issue when Jarvis discovers him missing from watch when the President of the United States tries reaching the Avengers for help. What the President can't know is that The Beast is actually off preparing a defense against Dark Phoenix, whose presence the U.S. has detected heading towards Earth.

Seeing The Beast at work here points up the differences in portrayal between the fuzzy blue Beast of a few years back and the normal looking Beast seen in X-Factor today. Artists had more fun drawing the furry Beast. On page 6 we see him concentrating with his tongue sticking out of one side of his mouth while in the next panel we see him working with one of his dextrous feet, something no longer incorporated into that character's visual lexicon.

Scott Summers is portrayed as repressing his feelings over what is happening to his beloved Jean. When Storm tries to offer some comfort, since Jean is her close friend as well, Scott resists it because he knows that if he faces all of the turbulent emotions he's holding in check, he'll crack under the strain.

The other X-Men work out in the Danger Room, trying to release some of the tensions they feel as they have experienced something new--they've just been trounced by one of their own team mates, and they know that if she returns, she'll do it again, just as easily.

"The sudden ending with Phoenix cured..."

The scene when Phoenix returns to Earth and goes to her parents home starts us wondering at her purpose; will she .murder her own parents to irrevocably sever all ties with her life as Jean Grey? We see her walk into the darkened house, perhaps once more getting in touch with her Jean Grey persona since this place is filled with everything that was Jean Grey. She can't block out her parents' and sister's thoughts and is an intruder on their innermost feelings. But when she detects the underlying fear of her powers, it is Dark Phoenix who responds with anger and threats of violence. She is two different beings in this sequence, both Jean Grey and Dark Phoenix, each reacting differently to her father's anger. Only the intervention of the X-Men distracted her from perhaps doing something irreversible to her family--or did it? As Scott later points out, the Jean Grey persona seems to be preventing Dark Phoenix from slaying her friends. She'll knock them around, but although she could easily dispose of them, she doesn't. It's this logic which enables Scott to actually pierce the Dark Phoenix personality and reach Jean. But even though he succeeds, there is no guarantee that Dark Phoenix couldn't take over again at the slightest whim, which is why Xavier attacks. He knows that the psychic dampers that Jean once had in place must be restored if Dark Phoenix is to be controlled.

Seeing the war between her two natures is quite interesting as it, of course, is a metaphor for what all of us go through in achieving a personal balance between what we feel is right and what we may at times be tempted to do that we know is wrong. Jean has the power to do whatever she wants and get away with it, thanks to the psychic tampering of Jason Wyngarde which caused her dark side to flower uncontrollably.

The sudden ending with Phoenix cured and Scott's proposal of marriage is an abrupt and unexpected turn of events, just as unexpected as the disappearance of the costume of Dark Phoenix so that Jean is left as naked as the day she was born, perhaps symbolic of a rebirth of Jean Grey. But while 20 years ago that would have been the conclusion to the story, now it's just the lead-in to the next sequence of events. And no one is more surprised than the X-Men by what happens next.

XMEN#137 "The Fate of the Phoenix!"

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Penciller/Co-Plotter: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editors: Jim Salicrup & Louise Jones

The X-Men, including The Beast, The Angel and Prof. X, are suddenly beamed aboard a Shi'ar Imperial Dreadnought, the flagship of Lilandra's fleet. It is not just a social visit.

Empress Lilandra proclaims that even though she owes her life and her throne to the help of the X-Men, she must be responsible to her people as well, and because of the threat she poses, Phoenix must be destroyed.

Gladiator lists the charges against Phoenix, the star and its inhabited planets she destroyed, the Shi'ar ship and its crew she slaughtered, and the X-Men are stunned. Even Jean is overwhelmed by the memory that the guilt of what her evil self did. Lilandra demands that the X-Men surrender The Phoenix, or face the consequences.

But suddenly Xavier intervenes, challenging Lilandra to a duel of honor for the Phoenix. By Shi'ar rules, it is the one challenge that Lilandra cannot refuse. She explains her position to her Kree and Skrull allies and they agree.

Lilandra informs the X-Men that Xavier's challenge has been accepted and the duel begins at dawn.

Jean Grey is alone with her thoughts, remembering what it was like to be Dark Phoenix, regretting what she did, understanding that she didn't want to do it but realizing that her realization doesn't change the nature of things.

That night the individual X-Men wrestle with their thoughts, thinking about what lies ahead. They understand what happened to Jean, and Wolverine in particular recognizes that she has two distinct personalities, one of them Dark Phoenix. He wonders if Prof. X can truly keep the dark side in check, or if it will break out again.

The next morning Scott thinks that while he can see Lilandra's position, he hopes that were their positions reversed, he would err on the side of mercy. Just then Jean comes in, wearing the costume of Marvel Girl, just as she did before she became Phoenix. Xavier's psychic dampers have removed the power of Phoenix from her completely. She wonders whether she is worth fighting for after what she has done. Scott insists that she is and that to believe differently would be to admit that Dark Phoenix has won. He vows to stand by her no matter what, and tells her he loves her with all his heart. She swears the same to him.

On the flagship's transporter deck, Scott faces the other X-Men and states that he hasn't the right to expect any of them to fight for Jean. Angel replies that they've all discussed it, and the X-Men will stand with Scott and Jean to the end.

Lilandra explains that the X-Men will fight the Imperial guard until one team is defeated. If the X-Men win, they all go free. If the X-Men lose, Jean Grey becomes the property of the Council to do with as they decide. As the X-Men are beaming down, Lilandra wishes she could be fighting at their side. Her advisor remarks that though they face hopeless odds, the X-Men are exceptional beings and might win. Lilandra, with tears in her eyes, states that he has her word that they will not win.

The X-Men are beamed down into the mysterious "blue area" of the moon where there is an Earth normal environment as well as the ruins of some ancient civilization. Jean scans the crater but reports no other intellect present, at the moment. Scott says that that won't last long, and that there are new members of the Imperial Guard whose powers they know nothing about.

They see a flash on the other side of the crater where the Imperial Guard has transported down. The Angel flies up to see what they're up to and forgetting to compensate for the moon's lower gravity, is propelled above the rim of the crater into the airless cold of space. He plummets back in and is rescued unharmed by Storm.

Wolverine spots the guard headed their way and Scott has the X-men split up into two groups. One group consists of Colossus, Storm, Wolverine and the Beast while the other is comprised of The Angel, Nightcrawler, Cyclops and Phoenix. They choose to use the ruins as cover and plan to apply hit-and-run tactics against the Imperials.

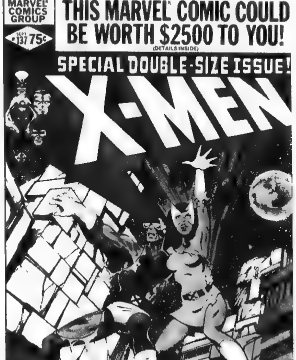
Scott's group is the first to be attacked; they encounter Imperial named Starbolt, Oracle and Smasher.

Meanwhile, the group led by The Beast encounters a huge robot named Warstar. But Warstar is actually two entities who divide to be more formidable, and then Gladiator attacks as well. Storm and Wolverine encounter a being called Earthquake right outside the home of The Watcher. When the ground shakes, Wolverine is thrown off balance and falls through the wall of the strange crystal dwelling. Storm is doing well against Earthquake until attacked from behind by Hussar and her neuro-whip. Together they defeat Storm.

Wolverine is confronted by an image of The Watcher who shows why it is dangerous to tread uninvited in his home. He then ejects Wolverine. As Wolverine rises, he encounters Storm, but something doesn't seem right about her. Trusting his senses, he hurts her away from him and she is revealed to be one of the Skrulls, who are all natural shape-changers. As Wolverine attacks the Skrull, he is saved by the Kree who, along with the Skrull, is meant to act only as an observer, not a combatant. The Skrull is so offended at being saved by one of the hated Kree that he attacks him by changing...into a monster.

Nightcrawler encounters a being named Manta who, with her infra-red vision, can see him in the dark. She strikes him down easily.

Colossus defeats one of the parts of the robot and then turns to help The Beast, who is felled by an electric charge be-



fore he can be helped. Then the Gladiator attacks Colossus and their battle causes the ruins to crumble around them.

Minutes later, the victor emerges.

He pulls the unconscious form of Colossus from the rubble. Xavier witnesses this from his position on the Shi'ar flagship and is heartbroken over what he has seen happen. Lilandra sees how Charles is hurt by each defeat of an X-Man. She longs too comfort him but knows she cannot. Her duty comes first.

Jean has lost mental contact with the other X-Men. She and Scott realize now that they're the only players left on their side. They again express their love for each other.

Then Cyclops and Phoenix are cornered. The Imperial Guard come at them forcing them to fight back all the harder.

But something else begins to happen, something everyone feared...

Aboard the Shi'ar flagship energy readings begin to go off the scales. The flare lights up half the lunar hemisphere and damages the flagship, punching right through its defensive screens. Lilandra calls out to Institute Plan Omega--if they fail to destroy Phoenix, they must burn out the entire planetary system to ensure that she dies.

Xavier sends out a mental summons to the X-Men. He knows that Lilandra, in her desperation, is right.

Jean's power bursts through the psychic restraints when she sees Scott cut down. But he's still alive and Xavier's mental warning arouses the other X-Men as well. Prof. X demands that Scott attack Phoenix while she is still comparatively weak. His optic blasts slice through the base of the building Phoenix is standing in front of and millions of tons of debris rain down upon her. The other X-Men join in, but Storm is still weak so Wolverine hurls Colossus at Phoenix. He strikes Jean, but not with his full force--he can't bring himself to. His attack shakes Phoenix so that she resumes some control, enough to understand what is happening to her, and that her power can never truly be controlled. She begs The X-Men to kill her, now, before it's too late.

Scott refuses and tries to go to her. Jean runs, feeling the power changing her again. Jean stops Scott, freezing him in position with a force bolt. She explains how scared she is, knowing that the change from Jean to Phoenix to Dark Phoenix is inevitable--as inevitable as death. She knows she can't continue her now-immortal existence by having to control herself every minute of every day lest she kill someone else. She wants no more deaths on her conscience. It has to end.

Behind her a strange device rises from the ground and points itself at her. She looks at Scott and says, "I love you, Scott. A part of me will always be with you." The device that rose behind her is a weapon that she activated. It destroys her in an instant.

Shocked, Cyclops sits down, realizing that Jean must have planned this from the beginning, must have read the minds of the Kree and Skrull observers to learn what ancient weapons were hidden there, and then, when Dark Phoenix manifested again, she had been weakened enough from battle to carry out her plan.

Jean Grey is dead.

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Well, at least she used to be. Jean Grey really did die in X-Men #137. But that wasn't the original plan. This issue had been completed with other art (later printed in a special volume which portrayed Jean Grey being stripped of her mutant powers completely)

"Occasionally, over the intervening years, some image of Phoenix would return..."

When then - Marvel Editor-In-Chief Jim Shooter saw them he demanded changes. Jean Grey, as Phoenix, had committed murder. Therefore she had to die. The ending of this issue was hastily rewritten and redrawn to meet the deadline and Jean Grey died. This reshaped events in the issues that followed. Instead of Scott and Jean leaving the X-Men to get married, Scott left to deal with the grief of his lover's death. And so it remained.

"Jean Grey really did die in X-Men #137. But that wasn't the original plan..."

Occasionally over the intervening years, some image of Phoenix would return, but not the real one. **The X-Men Vs. the Teen Titans Spectacular** actually did feature the "real" Phoenix in that it was some of her cosmic energy residue reformed, but it was Dark Phoenix alone, not the symbiote of Jean Grey and Dark Phoenix. That version of Phoenix was destroyed at the end of that story.

The mysterious "blue area" of the moon, where the conflict in this story takes place, was introduced in **Fantastic Four** #13 over twenty years ago, and it's just as evocative now as it was then. The ruins of a vanished civilization form an eerie backdrop, and this is underscored by the wide shot of just part of the crater. This all happens in on page 17. John Byrne's own fascination with the blue area continued long after he left the X-Men and he capitalized on it when he moved the Great Refuge of the Inhumans from Earth to this Earth-like environment on the moon, so that the people of Black Bolt would be free from the encroach of human civilization. That all happened in the pages of **The Fantastic Four**.

In an homage to the FF (not the first time this particular one was used), Byrne has Wolverine inadvertently invade the domicile of The Watcher, only to undergo a casual demonstration of that being's incredible power before being cast out of the private residence. Panel for panel, this sequence on page 27 is virtually identical with the first time this was done when the Red Ghost invaded The Watcher's home back in **Fantastic Four #13.**

An odd note about this issue is that on page 31 the Skrull observer is saved by his hated Kree ally, and in a rage transforms himself into a monster and attacks the Kree--but we never learn the outcome of this particular engagement.

That fascinating Shi'ar insect-like ship was first rendered by Dave Cockrum when he was still artist in residence on the X-Men.

The framing sequence of The Watcher works quite well in this story as it only appears on the opening and closing pages and does not ever intrude on the narrative. Since all of this happens near The Watcher's house, we would naturally expect him to be a passive observer of these dramatic events. It acts as a touching epilogue.

XMEN#138 "Elegy"

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Penciller/Co-Plotter: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Louise Jones

Jean Grey's grave forms the centerpiece of a tragic reunion. The X-Men (new and old) are gathered to pay their last respects to Jean Grey, who killed herself to spare the universe the deadly danger of Dark Phoenix.

The only person whose thoughts we intrude on is Scott Summers as he remembers when the X-Men were young and the day that Jean Grey first came to Charles Xavier's School For Gifted Youngsters. From there he finds himself reliving the moments he shared with her, first only in training and then when they fought side by side against a wide variety of mutant menaces.

First there was Magneto, whom they first battled when he attacked the Cape Citadel missile base.

Then they encountered The Vanisher followed by the threat of a seemingly unstoppable man called The Blob.

But it wasn't long before Magneto re-entered their lives, along with his cohorts Quicksilver, The Scarlet Witch, The Toad and Mastermind. Their battles were frequent, once even bringing them into conflict with Prince Namor, The Sub-Mariner, until Magneto was defeated on his secret base, Asteroid M, and Quicksilver and The Scarlet Witch turned their backs on the master of Magnetism to join The Avengers and redeem themselves in the eyes of humanity.

Scott remembers the introduction of Cerebro, and how Warren Worthington (The Angel) had pursued Jean until he realized that she loved Scott.

There were the encounters in strange places, like the Savage Land with its ruler, Ka-Zar, as well as with the man called The Stranger--an alien from space who took Magneto and The Toad with him as prisoners when he left Earth.

But one menace being ended only left room for more to appear, such as The Juggernaut, Xavier's stepbrother Cain Marko.

Each victory only seemed to pave the way for yet another conflict, such as when The Sentinels were unleashed against all of mutantkind.

Then there was the party for Bobby Drake (Iceman), on the night he turned 18, and how it was also a turning point for Scott. It was then that he confessed his love for Jean and learned that she felt the same for him.

More battles followed, including one with the being called Grotesk, whose defeat came at the cost of the life of Charles Xavier, or so it seemed.

When the X-Men split up after that, Bobby Drake encountered Lorna Dane, a mutant with powers over Magnetism whom Magneto claimed was his daughter. He lied. It was just a plot to force her to ally herself with him.

But soon the X-Men rejoined, understanding that this was where their purpose lay.

Scott's own brother, Alex, was soon revealed to be a powerful mutant. He eventually became involved with Lorna Dane, in a relationship that still endures.

When the Earth was threatened by the invasion of an alien horde, Xavier revealed that he was alive. Grotesk had murdered a mutant named The Changeling, a former foe who had learned he was dying and had come to Xavier to learn if there was some way he could make amends for his past misdeeds. Needing time alone to prepare for the alien horde, Xavier had The Changeling take his place as the Professor worked under cover.

The powers Xavier called on to drive off the aliens necessitated using all of the X-Men, including Jean. The cosmic potential touched on in that moment would culminate years later in the birth of Phoenix, and the unleashing of Dark Phoenix, or so Xavier believed at the time of the death of Phoenix.

With the passage of time came the passing of the original team of X-Men as most of them chose to move on with their lives and see what the world could hold for them other than fighting frightful unearthly menaces.

New X-Men stepped in to take the place of the departed members, and one of them was killed. Thunderbird was the first X-Man to die.

Soon the Sentinels emerged again, and in the wake of their defeat, circumstances brought about the birth of Phoenix--and the death of Marvel Girl.

Soon after the emergence of The Phoenix, she displayed incredible potential when she saved the uni-

verse from the menace of a neutron galaxy. It was the beginning of a long, complicated series of inter-related events that would ultimately bring about the creation of Dark Phoenix and culminate in the death of a distant solar system and the suicide of The Phoenix.

Following the funeral, Scott announces that he's leaving the X-Men, not to withdraw back into his shell but to join the world as a full human being who will honor the memory of Jean Grey. He watches as the line of cars bearing the mourners leaves the cemetery.

Simultaneously at Prof. Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters, a taxicab pulls up and a young girl emerges. It is Kitty Pryde, there to become the newest student, only no one is there to greet her. Dejected, she sits on the step, waiting and wondering about what could have been so all fired important that they could have forgotten that she was arriving today?

****

What can you say about an overview of the first 137 issues of the X-Men condensed into 16 pages? Claremont and Byrne hit the highlights and skim through the history of the group while conveying just enough information so that new readers would understand enough to follow subsequent storylines while also having their interest piqued enough to want to read a stack of back issues. Other than that, this reads like a hastily-assembled fill-in; this is not the story which was slated to follow #137.

While this story covers a lot of exciting events, it has an odd air of detachment to it, even though it is from the point of view of Scott Summers. Only when he mentions Jean does emotion enter the story. Otherwise it's pretty dry. Almost no new insights are offered into past events, the sole exception being the pointing out of "Before I'd Be Slave" in X-Men #65 as the starting point of unleashing Jean's more dangerous psi-powers. We know now, of course, that this isn't so.

The Phoenix remained a deeply fascinating character long after her death. The story that Claremont intended to tell about Jean Grey (rather than her death) was published in its entirety for the very first time in **Phoenix: The Untold Story** (April 1984) in which the X-Men are defeated by the Imperial Guard and Jean Grey has all of her mutant powers stripped from her, whereupon the team is then allowed to return to Earth. We're even presented with what would have been the idyllic splash page of **X-Men** #138 rather than the gathering around the grave opening of the actual issue.

Phoenix held everyone's interest to the point that it was finally decided by Kurt Busiek and John Byrne that Jean Grey had never been Phoenix and therefore had never died, thus introducing the concept of The Phoenix as an elemental force from space (which is close to the way she was portrayed in Teen Titans Vs. the X-Men).

"What can you say about an overview of the first 137 issues condensed into 16 pages?"

That Chris Claremont is not thrilled at how the death of Phoenix has been undercut (even though he didn't originally want her to die) is made obvious by the fact that Jean Grey was revived as a member of X-Factor almost two years ago and the X-Men still don't know she's alive!

The ending of **X-Men** #138 is quite poignant in that in all the excitement, everyone forgets that young Kitty Pryde is about to arrive. The story ends with her sitting forlornly on the stoop of the School For Gifted Youngsters, a young mutant about to embark on a new path, totally unaware that one of her new friends, one that had set out on the same path years before, is dead. It almost reminds one of the scene from the classic film where the young boy stands on the sidewalk outside of the home for boys, about to enter, ready to begin on a road that could be similar to that of the slightly older boy that has just died in the electric chair. Of course you know the film; so too must Claremont.

The starting point of the unleashing of Jean's fantastic powers is revealed for the first time...

X-MEN #139
"...Something Wicked This Way Comes!"

Writer: Chris Claremont
Plot/Pencils: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Louise Jones

The X-Men are working out in the Danger Room for the first time since the death of Phoenix. The Angel is with them and he is dangerously out of condition, colliding with Nightcrawler and stunning him, almost causing him injury except for the lightning quick work of Wolverine.

The Angel apologizes for his mistakes and says it won't happen again, but Wolverine points out that the hero has been solo for so long that he's bound to make more mistakes before he gets back into harness.

Nightcrawler tries to ease the tension by turning up with a tray full of lemonade (and a beer for Wolverine). But his entrance startles Kitty, who still hasn't gotten used to Kurt's bizarre appearance. Kitty also expresses concern about the Danger Room, and what it would be like for her in there. She's afraid of what might happen.

Xavier replies that it is only natural for her to express her concern, but that he won't allow her in there until her training has reached the point where he feels that she can stand up against anything she'd encounter.

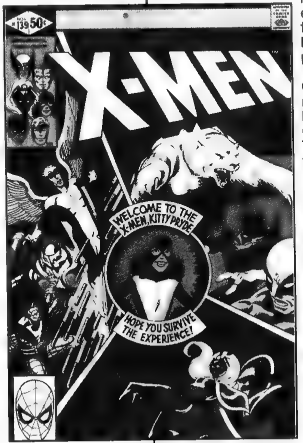
Prof. X states that Kitty needs a code-name to operate under and suggests Ariel. She doesn't much care for that, but Storm thinks Sprite might be good. That's much more to the girl's liking, although she says that she doesn't want to hear any jokes about people pulling her "Tab."

Wolverine, now sporting a new costume after his old one was shredded in battle with the Imperial Guard, approaches Xavier with the suggestion that it's about time he settled the Canadian government's dispute with him. Prof. X isn't sure that Wolverine should go alone, considering what happened

Ororo takes Kitty down to a studio so that she can take dance lessons, which is something the girl really enjoys.

In Ottawa, Canada, we meet Heather Hudson, wife of James MacDonald Hudson. She comes home and finds the door unlocked. Picking up a broom for defense, she investigates a noise in the kitchen and finds Wolverine and Nightcrawler. She recognizes Logan, who introduces her to Kurt.

Heather and James Hudson were Wolverine's only friends until he left Canada for the X-Men. James Hudson is also known as Vindicator, the leader of Alpha Flight. Logan explains that he's come back to make peace with Alpha Flight and the government, if possible.



Hudson is elsewhere in Canada with two other members of Alpha Flight--Michael Twoyoungmen and Corporal Anne Mackenzie. They are hunting some creature who lurks in the woods, but have been unable to pinpoint his location thus far. Michael detects intruders and the three prepare for danger, the other two switching to their alter-egos of Shaman and Snowbird.

Wolverine and Nightcrawler appear at the back door and following a tense exchange, they calm down just in time for Nightcrawler to be frightened by Snowbird who had changed into a polar bear. The humor inherent in this situation breaks the ice all around.

The three members of Alpha Flight are in search of the members of a missing family, who according to their young son were attacked by some creature--who killed, and ate, the boy's father.

Vindicator shows Wolverine the cast of a print of the creature and Logan immediately recognizes it as belonging to the Wendigo. Wolverine had encountered it when still working for the Canadian government. He had been sent to deal with the Hulk and found The Wendigo and the Hulk battling it out. Wolverine feels that he has a lot of unfinished business with the Wendigo.

Wolverine thinks he might be able to track the

missing woman and her baby by their scent.

Outside, Nightcrawler is retrieving material from the rent-a-car and admiring the sky in this, the land of the midnight sun. But what Nightcrawler doesn't realize is that he's being observed by something that is getting closer and closer until it is right on top of him. It reveals itself to be the Wendigo as it rushes at a startled Nightcrawler.

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This is Wolverine's story and seems to be a deliberate dramatic right turn away from the tragedy inherent in what had happened to Phoenix.

At first we see Wolverine working out with the rest of the team, but he rescues Nightcrawler when The Angel messes up. We also see that Logan has not quite gotten over Xavier's condescending treatment during an earlier session in the Danger Room. When Wolverine remarks that he thinks that "Charley" made the right decision to make Storm the team leader after Cyclops left, Xavier remarks: "Wolverine, call me 'professor,' 'professor X,' ' professor Xavier' or even, if you must, 'Charles.' But not 'Charley.' Is that understood?" Logan casually replies, "Sure, Chuck." This one conversation encapsulates Wolverine's self-assured, cocky attitude towards life. But Wolverine later shows another side when he describes his first encounter with The Wendigo.

The Wendigo is a mythological creature first popularized in the Algernon Blackwood short story, "The Wendigo" and was then adapted into the Marvel canon in the Seventies. The transformation of an innocent human into the monster is an integral part of the character, although I don't recall that cannibalism was a facet of the original story. This tends to lend an even more bizarre and frightening overtone to the character.

Even though when last Logan and James Hudson had met (**X-Men** #120) they had departed on an antagonistic note, they resolve. their personal differences fairly quickly and put them aside to deal with the larger issue of The Wendigo. Hudson doesn't even bring up the fact that Wolverine broke out of custody and escaped after Alpha Flight and the Canadian government had gone to a lot of trouble to capture him.

Heather Hudson, whom we had not met before, appears in this issue and we learn that both she and her husband had been Logan's close friends. She obviously has no grudge against Wolverine, and if James Hudson harbors any resentment, it's short lived.

This may be partially because only some of the Alpha Flight team are present so there's an opportunity for calmer heads to prevail. Certainly the humorous antics of Nightcrawler help quite a bit.

Nightcrawler has often been used to good effect as a source of humor. Despite his nightmarish appearance and spiked tail, he's capable of coming across as harmless in an elfin way. Seeing him in this light makes us identify with him more and really feel for him when he's confronted by the monstrous Wendigo on the final page. Clearly we know that the worst is yet to come.

"This is Wolverine's story and seems...a deliberate dramatic turn away from tragedy..."

"Heather Hudson, whome we had not met before, appears and we learn that both she and her husband had been Logan's close friends..."

XMEN#140 "Page!"

Writer: Chris Claremont
Plot/Pencils: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Louise Jones

Colossus is clearing a stump on the property near the mansion. He feels good doing such manual labor as it reminds him of life on the collective farm back in the USSR. He explains to Angel how working like this makes him see how his power is dwarfed by the majesty of nature. This conversation also shows to The Angel that Peter is not as simple a person as he had initially believed.

Ororo goes downtown to pick up Kitty Pryde from her dance lesson and on the way has to discourage an admiring male with a little instant thunderstorm. When she arrives and picks up Kitty, she finds that there is something about the dance teacher, Stevie, that bothers her even though she also feels that this is a very nice woman. As they leave, Kitty phases into the car, which upsets Storm. Kitty says that she checked to make sure that no one was around but Storm explains that she still shouldn't flaunt her powers. Storm explains that she's concerned about Wolverine and Nightcrawler, whom she hasn't heard from since they went to Canada to attempt to solve Wolverine's running dispute with the government up there.

She has every right to be concerned because at that very moment Nightcrawler is being chased by the Wendigo. He eludes its grasp and runs, but it is close behind him, and when Kurt races up a tree, the thing just knocks the tree down so that Nightcrawler tumbles into its hands. It's too strong to break free from and so he just manages to concentrate through the pain to teleport free. He appears some distance away in mid-air but then immediately teleports safely to the ground, only to see the Wendigo burst out of the trees and bear down on him again.

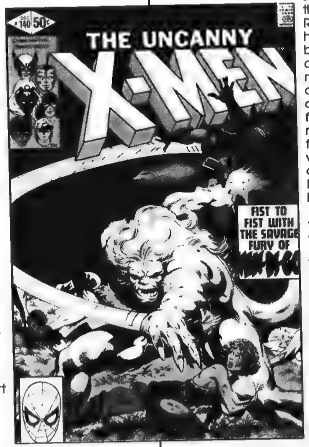
Kurt tries to use his agility to keep out of its way, but it finally connects and knocks Nightcrawler flying. He lands right outside the cabin.

Inside, Wolverine, Hudson, Snowbird and Shaman hear the sound of Nightcrawler's body hitting the wall and go to investigate . They emerge to find the Wendigo lifting the pickup truck. As the creature hurls it, Vindicator uses his battlesuit to destroy the truck before it can hit anyone. Not to be outdone, the Wendigo yanks a good sized tree from the ground and knocks Vindicator aside with it. Snowbird goes after Hudson, but Wolverine knows that the battlesuit will protect him.

The Wendigo runs off with Wolverine in hot pursuit while Shaman stays behind to put out the fire caused by the ignition of the gasoline in the truck.

Out in the woods, Wolverine is joined by Snowbird, who has been searching unsuccessfully for the Wendigo from the air, but has been stymied by the thick woods.

Wolverine starts thinking back on when he quit Department H and left his friends James and Heather Hudson. They had found Logan near their home in the Canadian Rockies and nursed him back to health. They had grown close but when Dept. H gave him the adamantium skeleton and claws it made him virtually unbeatable, and turned him into a killing machine, something that Wolverine found difficult to accept. He never forgave the government for what they made him into, so when Charles Xavier offered him an alternative, Wolverine took it. In so doing, he turned away from his only friends.



Wolverine and Snowbird track the Wendigo to his lair, where it has Mrs. Parnell and her baby. Snowbird flies back to get Vindicator and Shaman and as she leaves, Wolverine notes that it looks like the Wendigo is hungry again. It rolls away a rock to reveal the woman, and as it prepares to start chewing on her leg, Wolverine strikes.

Logan strikes without holding anything back and lays into the Wendigo with a berserker rage. Again and again he strikes, but while the creature is stunned, it is not really injured. Wolverine forges on, denying his own pain and fatigue as he strives only to defeat this thing that towers over him. Finally the Wendigo collapses into unconsciousness.

Wolverine hastily introduces himself to Mrs. Parnell and begins leading her and her baby to safety, explaining that her little boy is already safe in the hospital. But suddenly a shadow falls across their path and the Wendigo grabs up Logan and begins flailing him around like a toy. Wolverine is too exhausted to put up a fight.

Just then Nightcrawler appears nearby and strikes the creature a powerful blow across the side of the head. Then Vindicator nails the Wendigo with a power blast. But the Wendigo is holding up. Snowbird changes into a white wolverine and attacks the Wendigo. She

savagely wounds the creature, driving it into unconsciousness. But when the fight is over, Snowbird is still a wolverine, with the savage, inhuman persona of that creature.

Logan approaches her and talks to Snowbird, forcing her to remember who and what she is. Finally she changes back to her normal form. The Wendigo is left wounded but it will heal completely within hours. Meanwhile Shaman prepares a spell to use on it.

By dawn, Shaman is ready and he casts a spell which succeeds in turning the Wendigo back into its original human form, one Georges Baptiste. But Vindicator immediately places the man under arrest for crimes he committed as the Wendigo because he had voluntarily become the beast. Vindicator thinks that the courts won't be too harsh. And because Logan was instrumental in defeating the creature, Vindicator thinks he can get the Canadian government to lift its sanctions against him.

At the Parliament Building in Ottawa, Vindicator is informed that the government now consider Alpha Flight a luxury they can no longer afford. So the team is on its own.

Meanwhile, in Demming, New Mexico, there is a breakout from the penitentiary as one Fred J. Dukes (alias The Blob) breaks free, vowing to join the new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants.

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This issue has an odd opening—the last issue ended on a hair-raising cliff-hanger while this one doesn't pick up at that point at all but sandwiches in four pages of the X-Men back in New York before leaping back into the story continued from #139. It seems perfectly natural, but reading the two issues back to back creates a very jarring, unnecessary break in continuity. Granted, the sequences are good, but they could just as easily fit into the issue later as their appearance has no impact on the immediate storyline. The Angel has a conversation with Colossus in which he learns that there is more to this man than just the perception of him as a simple farmer from the Ukraine. There is, in fact, something poetic in Peter's soul. In the second sequence, Storm dilutes the passions of an unwanted admirer and then picks up Kitty from her dance lesson. They are both interesting character bits, but they don't fit into the issue. It may well be that Claremont wanted to insert them because this is largely an action issue in which there would be no time or place for quiet, introspective scenes in the major plot.

And yet Claremont does manage to slip reflective moments into the story. When Wolverine and Snowbird are out hunting the Wendigo, Claremont establishes both that Snowbird doesn't like Wolverine and information about the past Logan shares with James and Heather Hudson (page 11 of the story). This sequence is short but tells us more about the mysterious Wolverine than we'd known before.

For a code approved comic, the Wendigo story has some rather horrific elements in that the creature is cannibalistic. Not just that but it likes eating its prey when it's still warm. On page 12, panel 6, it's very obvious that Wolverine is interrupting the thing just as it is preparing to take a Wendigo sized bite out of the woman's leg! And from the expression on her face and her shriek, she knows what he's up to as well! Still, it could have been a lot worse if the Wendigo decided it wanted something more bite-sized to start with. After all, the woman is holding a baby in her arms.

The other affecting scene occurs in the midst of the action when Snowbird, in the form of a white wolverine, has just defeated the cannibalistic monstrosity,. As a wolverine she has all of the animal's primal instincts, and for just a moment she loses touch with her own humanity. Wolverine, who has often been accused of being brutish and unfeeling, is the one who can reach out and touch Snowbird through the animalistic haze. Even though he knows that she doesn't like him, and in fact she fought to capture him months before, he is still able to approach her and say, "Annie, it's Logan. Hear me, Princess. Listen to me.' When she leaps and then changes back to Snowbird, the scene when she falls into Wolverine's arms, overcome and grateful for what he did for her, is quite touching, more powerful in fact than Wolverine's own battle with the Wendigo because, unlike the average fight scene, this has a powerful emotional subtext.

"For a code approved comic, the Wendigo story has some rather horrific elements..."

Almost overlooked at the end of the story is a strange aircraft in which Alpha Flight takes Georges Baptiste prisoner. It looks like some sort of strange hovercraft which is very intricately designed but we only get a good look at it in one panel.

Wolverine and Nightcrawler have an odd conversation at the end of the story in which Kurt tries to compare Logan to the Wendigo. Wolverine states, "I never used my claws on someone who hadn't tried to kill me first. I call that self-defense." But wait! Nightcrawler was present when they were in the Savage Land and Wolverine snuck up on one of the guard's serving the Petrified Man and apparently killed him! Certainly at the time Nightcrawler was very disturbed by what he saw, but he doesn't seem to remember it here.

Although you'd never know it, the typical prison breakout scene at the end of this issue is the lead-in to one of the best X-Men stories ever published.

XMEN#141 "Days Of Future Past."

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Co-Plotter/Penciller: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Louise Jones

It is the 21st century and Kate Pryde is en route to a secret rendezvous with Wolverine. It's in a bad part of town, but then most of New York has become a slum.

A trap door opens at her feet and Kate finds herself confronted by Rogues, and they hate muties even more than they hate the Sentinels. They move on her but Kate fights back, and then Wolverine shows up just in time to take out the rest of the Rogues. He refrains from using his claws because that would alert the Sentinels. Logan has been working in the Canadian Resistance Army and informs Kate that as soon as the Sentinels try to move out of North America, the other powers will launch a full-scale nuclear strike. Logan gives Kate a module which she has to sneak into the Sentinels' camp.

Kate catches the uptown tram where everyone's garment bears an H or an A. H means a human clean of mutant genes while A is for Anomalous Human with mutant genetic potential and forbidden to breed. This came about after the Mutant Control Act of 1988, which allowed mutants to be hunted down and exterminated. As she re-enters the camp, Kate passes the cemetery whose graves bear names such as Ben Grimm, Charles Xavier, Scott Summers and Kurt Wagner. It is a massive graveyard.

The only surviving members of the X-Men (who now wear inhibitor collars, just as Kate does) are Ororo Monroe and Peter Rasputin (as well as the absent Wolverine). There is also Franklin Richards, sole survivor of the Fantastic Four. Kate delivers the module to them and informs them that Logan will strike at midnight. Also present are Rachel, Franklin's girl friend and a wheelchair bound Magneto.

They enter a room where they set up a jammer which allows their powers to function in proximity so that they can carry out their plan. Kate lies flat on a mat and joins minds with Rachel, and then the others. Suddenly she feels as though her soul is flung out across an abyss.

On Oct., 31, 1980, Kitty Pryde wanders into the Danger Room, thinking that the session hasn't begun because the door is unlocked. What she doesn't realize is that the door is always unlocked. She freezes, unable to use her phasing power to escape, causing the other X-Men to have to rescue her. Nightcrawler appears just in time to hit the "panic button" which immediately shuts down all functions in the Danger Room.

Then the room is set on low power for Kitty to have her first training session there. She's nervous and so phases and then closes her eyes as she walks through the room from one side to the other, where nothing touches her.

But just as she completes her session, she collapses as though struck. Nightcrawler appears at her side and reports that she's all right, but appears stunned. She's taken to the infirmary where, although still unconscious, she seems okay. The bio-sensor records her brainwave pattern as being very similar to her normal one, but also different--more complex.

Kitty suddenly wakes up and starts babbling about how it's wonderful to see Kurt alive and that it's worked and that she wasn't really sure that it would. She explains that she's from 30 years in the future and is there to prevent the assassination of presidential candidate Robert Kelly. Charles Xavier and Moira MacTaggert, which would set in motion a sequence of events that would culminate in a nuclear holocaust 30 years later. The X-Men decide that it would be too dangerous not to believe her. They decide to fly to Washington where Prof. X would be able to mindscan Kitty and determine the truth. There's also the matter of her warning that the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants will attack there.

Kitty wonders what is happening with her friends, thirty years later.

The future X-Men in 2013 are making their way through an old subway tunnel, until they're discovered by Sentinels. Franklin dies quickly, Rachel attacks in return, as does Colossus, free now of their inhibitor collars. Wolverine also joins in the fray and disables a mutant. They disable the Sentinels which attacked them and then flee, moving on to their destination--the Sentinel nerve center in the Baxter Building.

In 1980, the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants are preparing to attack. They consist of Mystique, Avalanche, Destiny, Pyro and the Blob. Their plan is to make mankind respect and fear the homo superior, and therefore gain them more power. If their plan is carried out, it will have the opposite effect.

The mutant hearings are under way and Robert Kel-

ly is taking a strong, anti-mutant stance. As the X-Men (in civilian guise) enter the hearing room, Xavier scans Kitty's mind and is startled by what he sees.

Suddenly the Brotherhood bursts through a wall of the Senate chamber and prepare to attack--but they are confronted by the assembled might of the X-Men.

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The cover of this issue lets you know right away that something very different is in store. The story inside immediately puts you in the middle of a grim future reality with details laid in with speed and care. Rather than reading like an issue of a comic book, it makes us feel as though we're inside of a science fiction novel. The approach to the story is more deliberate and plot and detail are handled much more like what we encounter in a novel. The fact that for about half of the story no one appears in any costume enhances this effect. Interestingly, one of the original plans for the new X-Men before they were introduced in **Giant Size X-Men** #1 was a group of mutants who fought without the colorful costumes normally associated with superheroes, not unlike the way the Fantastic Four were in the first two issues of that title.

At the time of this story's appearance, what was portrayed as the year 2013 was clearly meant to be the future as it would happen. Kate Pryde had married Peter Rasputin and Franklin Richards was linked romantically to Rachel. Even Magneto is shown as being aligned with the X-Men, something which at that time was startling to consider. But while Magneto's personality change has come about since then, the assassination of candidate Kelly was averted and so that future can never came about, or did it? When Rachel comes back to our time from the future, she finds that not only did Scott and Jean never marry to have Rachel as their daughter, but Jean is dead. Jean isn't dead any more. Does this mean that they could still marry and produce Rachel as a daughter? Actually a later issue of the X-Men establishes that they would have had to already marry in order for Rachel to have been born, so things are still hazy about whether a future ruled by the Sentinels will come about.

It is unusual to tie a story down to a specific year since we learned a few years back that the first 20 years of Marvel Comics history actually took place in 7 years, not 20. This is why stories not only seldom refer to specific years but also rarely employ prominent public figures. Remember, this is the age of reprinting; Spider-Man comics from the early Sixties with references to such tv shows as ***The Beverly Hillbillies*** are changed to ***Starsky & Hutch*** in order to be "updated." But with all of the changes going on in the **X-Men**, pinning this story down to 1980 makes sense since there is a definite continuity. Many events in books such as **The Fantastic Four** and **Spider-Man** can more easily be mixed and matched throughout the years without causing much confusion. After all, by the time issue 141 is reprinted in the **Classic X-Men** series, few of those members may even still be part of what we'll know as the X-Men then.

The Sentinels have always been one of the more chilling and fascinating menaces pitted against the X-Men since they are a weapon invented out of fear and prejudice whose employment has always bordered on legally sanctioned genocide. Claremont only took it to the logical extreme in this story since it was always implied that should their war against mutants gain a beachhead and move forward successfully, this would be the outcome.

"At the time of this story's appearance, what was portrayed as the year 2013 was clearly meant to be the future as it would happen..."

The new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants begs the question--do they really consider themselves evil? What kind of person decides they're evil and then adopts that word as a badge of identification? Truly evil people don't consider themselves such but rather feel that their own point of view is superior to others, and also believe that might makes right. Evil people tend not even to recognize that there is such a thing as morals and ethics but believe that such standards are a sham perpetrated by one segment of society against another and that no one really believes in such things at all, but just use such expressions as a means to an end. All in all, evil people believe themselves to be above the laws of men. This new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants shows its members to be of this stripe.

XMEN#142 "Mind Out Of Time!"

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Claremont
Co-Plotter/Penciller: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Louise Jones

Police move in to try to arrest the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, but The Blob quickly demonstrates the foolishness of the attempt.

Avalanche uses his power to send the marble floor rolling across the room and upsets the X-Men, knocking those who can't fly off of their feet.

Nightcrawler recovers and uses acrobatics learned in the circus to maintain his balance and then teleports around Avalanche, striking at him again and again to keep him from using his awful power until Destiny, the blind precog, tells Avalanche to strike out to his left because that is where Nightcrawler will next appear. Kurt is slammed in the abdomen by the mutant's powerful fist.

While the other X-Men engage the rest of the Brotherhood in battle, Kitty and The Angel seek out Senator Kelly to protect him against assassination.

Mystique has meanwhile tricked Xavier and Moira and used nerve gas to knock them out. She decides to keep Xavier alive as a hostage, but when consulting Destiny about the future of the battle, she cannot give an accurate answer. A random factor is present, effecting things, but the seer cannot describe what that factor is. Kate Pryde, the future self of Kitty Pryde who now occupies her body, wonders if everything she risked to come back to the past for has been in vain.

In the future, Wolverine is with the remnants of the X-Men, having successfully freed them from an internment center and destroyed several Sentinels in the process. But while The Sentinels expect the mutants to flee to the Canadian Resistance Army, their real plan is to attack the headquarters of the deadly robots housed in the Baxter Building. Succeeding in this would disrupt Sentinel activity all across North America.

Storm goes first, disabling a Sentinel guard and gaining access to the Baxter Building. Rachel remains outside to protect the unconscious body of Kate Pryde, which houses the mind of Kitty Pryde displaced there when the mind transference across time took place.

Wolverine, Storm and Colossus enter the Baxter Building and activate the old private elevator of the Fantastic Four.

In 1980, the X-Men and the Brotherhood are having a battle royal, and when the Army Fast Reaction Special Weapons Team moves in, they complicate things by attacking the X-Men and using weapons that the Brotherhood can take advantage of, such as when Pyro uses a flame thrower wielded by one of the soldiers and creates a huge flame demon. When the flame thing attacks Wolverine, Storm uses a massive wedge of air to scatter the fire harmlessly and rescue Logan.

Wolverine is injured, and when Nightcrawler moves to help him, another Nightcrawler appears claiming the other is a shape-changing Impostor. They engage in battle and when Wolverine decides to see who can teleport away from his claws, Storm holds him back, demanding that his claws only be used against their deadliest foes. Wolverine resents the idea but very reluctantly complies.

Colossus and Wolverine team up to knock the Blob off his feet and into Avalanche, taking out two at once. Storm then deals with Pyro by creating a monsoon confined to just a small area around the master of flame, thus knocking him out.

Kurt finally defeats his double, who is revealed to be Mystique. She looks much like Kurt in many ways and reveals that she knows things about him as well. But when Kurt says he wants her taken with them, she vanishes. The Angel urges the X-Men to do the same since the Army reinforcements have arrived and captured the rest of the Brotherhood. The X-Men start to leave, but then remember Kitty. She is still with Senator Kelly.

In 2013, Logan, Ororo and Peter emerge inside the master control of the Sentinels' headquarters. Stepping from the secret elevator, Colossus hurls Wolverine at a Sentinel, using a maneuver they have practiced many times in the past. This time it works against them. The Sentinel knew they were there. It was impossible to penetrate their security undetected and the Sentinels allowed their entrance so as to more easily slay the mutants. Using an energy blast from its huge mechanical hand, the Sentinel blasts the flesh from Wolverine's bones; all that remains is his adamantium skeleton, steaming from the heat which incinerated Logan's body.

The Sentinel demands that the other X-Men yield, but instead Storm attacks destroying the Sentinel which

had just slain their friend. More Sentinels join in the fray, but Storm and Colossus don't surrender.

Storm is the next to fall, speared through the back. Colossus fights back, knocking a Sentinel clear through the wall, but finally he, too, falls.

On the street below, Rachel hides, shielding the unconscious form of Katherine Pryde-Rasputin. In her mind she has felt Logan, Ororo and Peter die. Sitting there, she wonders if Kate will be trapped in the past should her body die there in the future.

In 1980, Kate is hiding when she sees the blind precog Destiny get the drop on Senator Kelly. Destiny holds a crossbow on Kelly but is unaware of Kate's presence. The timeswitch has made her invisible to Destiny's awareness.

Kate charges, phasing through Destiny and disrupting her power because of her own unique presence in the time stream. The crossbow is deflected and Kelly narrowly escapes death, but the confluence of Destiny and Kate causes the mindswitch to recur and Kate spins back to the future and her own body, while Kitty returns through time, momentarily meeting her future self on the way.

Storm flies in and rescues Kitty, who is waking up and wondering why she isn't in the Danger Room. Before leaving, Storm tells Kelly that the child saved his life, and that he should remember that there are both good and bad mutants rather than condemning them all. As she flies off, Xavier and Moira emerge unharmed from a nearby room and converse with the senator.

On the plane back to Westchester, Xavier explains to Kitty what has happened for she has no memory of the period when Kate occupied her body nor of the future.

The Angel asks whether the future has been altered since they saved the life of Senator Kelly, but Xavier states that only time will tell.

But the final curtain has yet to fall. A secret meeting is held in the White House with Robert Kelly, Sebastian Shaw, the President and Henry Peter Gyrich. It is decided to put Sentinels into production and investigate further whether mutants are a menace. That will have to be resolved in the near future.

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The climax of the most frightening story ever presented in the twenty-four year history of the X-Men. In the future presented in this story (both parts tend to be referred to collectively as "Days Of Future Past"), the Sentinels have captured or slain not only mutants, but anyone with superpowers, including such people as Iron Man and Captain America. While most of the story takes place in 1980 and deals with the attack of the new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, it's the section with the raid on the Sentinels' headquarters which remains in the memory. The death of Wolverine (which is depicted on the cover, but not as graphically as inside) is startling even though we are forewarned of it. Seeing part of his metal skeleton protruding into the panel and evidently stripped of all flesh is downright grisly. It also gives us a better idea of what was meant all along when Wolverine was described as having an adamantium skeleton. It's a more complicated structure than we thought; it has been pointed out that the marrow of bones creates blood, the bones would have to be sheathed with admantium and not replaced in their entirety. It's also evident that Wolverine's skull would have to be sheathed since it houses the brain and safely replacing bone with metal in that area would be impossible.

"The climax of the most frightening story ever presented in the twenty-four year history of the X-Men..."

This is definitely one of the more violent comics in recent years. Even though Storm is speared through the back in silhouette, it's still pretty strong stuff.

This story even ties the Hellfire Club in with what is going on as Sebastian Shaw is there to support the creation of the Sentinels (which we elsewhere learn are being manufactured by a company he owns, so he profits by their creation even though he is a mutant himself).

It's hard to believe that Kitty Pryde only just arrived to join up with the X-Men in #138 because by this issue she has already emerged as a major character with a future tied to Peter Rasputin (although this element of the future has apparently been changed--or has it? A lot can happen in 30 years).

Although not much is revealed about her, Rachel is introduced in these two issues; her character will emerge as being important as time goes by.

XMEN#143 "Demon"

Writer/Co-Plotter: Chris Clarmont
Co-Plotter; Penciller: John Byrne
Inker: Terry Austin
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Louise Jones

One of the first battles fought by the new X-Men was against the N'Garai, things from another dimension that entered our world through a gateway in a strange, ancient cairn of stones located near the school in Westchester. Storm managed to destroy the cairn and apparently seal the gateway. But apparently isn't good enough; months later, on a frigid winter's day when the ground is frosty white and the sky is lit by a bright full moon, something emerges from the stones--a creature more hideous than any of those faced by Storm on that day months before. The first victims of the N'Garai are a man and wife out looking to cut down a small pine to be their first Christmas tree. Instead they find a creature from a world where Christmas doesn't exist, and where weaker beings serve only as cattle, to be slaughtered and used for sustenance. The thing feeds on both flesh and soul on that bitter winter's night.

In the mansion, Xavier is once more running through the ignition sequence for the Blackbird aircraft. It's something all of the X-Men must know in case the lives of them all depend on just one X-Man who is conscious and able to handle the controls of the sleek, jet aircraft.

While everyone is preparing to go out for the evening, Logan's lady friend, Mariko Yashida arrives. Nightcrawler playfully swings down next to her with a sprig of mistletoe and gives the lady a kiss. Logan blows his top and swings at Kurt, his claws missing only because Nightcrawler teleports away. Colossus grabs Logan from behind while Prof. X mentally admonishes Logan for reacting in such a violent manner to Kurt's playfulness.

Wolverine apologizes. He thought he could change, but realizes that his killer instincts are a lot closer to the surface than he'd hoped.

To ease the tension, Kitty sneaks up on Peter and kisses him on the cheek. He's painfully embarrassed and wastes no time leaving with Prof. X, Kurt, Ororo and the others. Even the Angel flies off on a date. When they leave, Kitty is relieved until she realizes that she's there all alone!

Kitty tries calling home but there's no answer. When the phone rings a moment later, it turns out to be Scott calling in to wish everyone a Merry Christmas. Scott is in Shark Bay, Florida and, after hanging up the phone, he looks up the skipper of a nearby boat who is supposed to be looking to hire on crew members. The skipper turns out to be Lee Forrester, a lovely lady Captain. Scott is more than just a little surprised.

Kitty decides to suit up and work out in the Danger Room, but she doesn't set it for a combat cycle, just as a gymnasium. While she's exercising, the burglar alarm sounds indicating that there's a possible intruder in Ororo's room. She phases up through the house and emerges in Storm's room to find it freezing cold even though it had been like a hothouse. Kitty isn't sure what caused this since the outside cold couldn't have killed the plants there as quickly as this did. As she walks across the room, she finds that the floor is covered with a strange, green goop. About the time she notices this, the N'Garai reveals itself in all its hellish might. It towers over her, the color of decay, and lunges to make her its next victim. Kitty phases through the floor to escape but it tears a hole in the floor to follow her. When she turns and phases through the wall, it keeps tearing holes in walls to follow her. It knows what it wants.

While running down some stairs, she phases into the closet underneath, hoping that the thing will not be able to figure out where she's gone. But as she opens the closet door and reaches for the phone to contact Xavier on his car-phone, it strikes, smashing through the door and startling her before she can escape. Kitty phases an instant before it strikes but she still feels numbing pain from its attack and her right arm hangs limp at her side. Somehow the thing can affect her even in her ephemeral state.

She enters the Danger Room and then phases up to the control room to program the Danger Room for its most dangerous sequences. She hopes to slow the thing down long enough to summon Prof. X. The thing bursts into the control room and Kitty phases through the control panel into the Danger Room. The N'Garai follows effortlessly, crashing through metal and supposedly un-

breakable glass. As she lands in the Danger Room, the trap springs shut and the thing finds itself the target of bizarre attacks. It starts ripping up the floor, which makes the Danger Room run wild. It's just one step behind her, getting angrier as she gets tireder from the relentless chase. Finally the Danger Room is completely trashed but it's still chasing her.

She hops aboard a monocar which connects the underground hangar to the mansion. But before she can get halfway there, the thing rips up the track behind her, derailing the car. Kitty flees into the hangar and phases into the cockpit of the Blackbird jet aircraft. She begins to activate the controls, trying to hold down her panic so that she doesn't forget any of the sequence. The aircraft is on a turntable which she can turn so that the rear of the jet is aimed at the N'Garai. When it gets close enough, she fires the engines at maximum thrust, catching the creature in its awful heat. The Blackbird shudders and snaps its landing gear, crashing to the floor. As Kitty exits the craft, she sees a hand reach from the flames.

It's midnight when Xavier and the others arrive back at the mansion. Kitty's parents are with them.

Later, Ororo takes Kitty aside and says that she's been up to her room and wonders what happened. Kitty tells her very casually that she fought a monster which wrecked the Danger Room, the hangar and the Blackbird. On Christmas Eve, Kitty Pryde underwent what to all intents and purposes was a rite of passage, and emerged victorious.

....

While this is a sequel to **X-Men #96**, none of the creatures in that story (drawn by Dave Cockrum) looked anything like the N'Garai in this story. That look came about after a little movie called ***Alien*** came out in 1979, and this issue would not be the last time that creatures influenced by the nightmarish imaginings of H.R. Giger would turn up in the **X-Men**. But this story follows the structure of ***Alien*** more consciously than subsequent treatments of the material would. Kitty is alone when she is attacked and has to run from the thing. Just when she thinks that she's given it the slip, there it is again! Nothing stops it as it crashes through one barrier after another. Finally she blasts it with the jets of an aircraft just as in ***Alien*** Ripley blasts the creature with the rocket engines of a space shuttle. The thing clearly has intelligence because it often anticipates and figures out what its prey is doing, just as the creature in ***Alien*** hides in the shuttle when the spacecraft is programmed to blow up.

"While this is a sequel to X-Men #96, none of the creatures in that story looked anything like the N'Garai in this story..."

If there's any doubt that Claremont and Byrne went to some trouble to use this specific look of the creature and justify it in some way, the flashback on pages 1-3 shows the creatures in **X-Men #96**, only none of the monsters in Issue 96 looked anything like that when you compare the actual issue with the flashback. It was just a handy excuse to draw a Giger-style alien monster.

"This is the last issue of the X'Men that John Byrne worked on..."

This is the last issue of **X-Men** that John Byrne worked on. It contains a very strange scene with Wolverine on page 7 in which Logan seemingly tries to kill Nightcrawler just because he kisses Mariko. This doesn't make any sense. In 139 & 140 we see that Logan and Nightcrawler are good friends and can talk to each other the way that only good friends can. The scene in 143 doesn't make sense and reads as though it was written by someone who *thinks* she understands Wolverine, unlike Chris Claremont who does. I can see this scene being part of the reason that Claremont and Byrne no longer could see eye-to-eye on the X-Men.

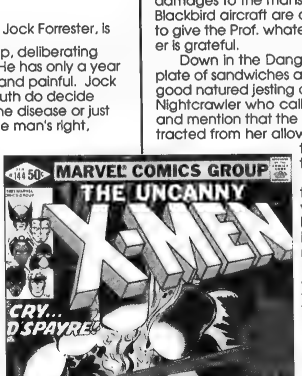
The last few issues (as well as her introduction in the Hellfire Club saga), were designed to make us like and respect Kitty Pryde. This is the story that first really demonstrates that she can stand up under pressure. It's also one of the strangest Christmas stories ever done in comics, or in Kitty's case, a Chanukah story.

XMEN#144 "Even in Death..."

Writer: Chris Claremont
Penciller: Brent Anderson
Inker: Josef Rubenstein
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Louise Jones

A middle-aged man, Jock Forrester, is sitting on a riverbank in a swamp, deliberating over what he has just learned. He has only a year to live, and his end will be slow and painful. Jock has come to this haunt of his youth do decide whether he should try to fight the disease or just end it all now. Unseen off to the man's right, something watches. It is the Man-Thing, a creature that was once biologist Ted Sallis until a freak accident transformed him.

As the Man-Thing begins to approach Forrester, black tendrils spread across the ground and as they near the man, he reaches down, picks up his loaded revolver, places it against his head and pulls the trigger. As he dies, the black, oily smoke-like substance reforms into the demonic D'Spayre, the embodiment of evil.



Upon seeing this being, Man-Thing lunges, but D'Spayre fights back by filling the Man-Thing with fear; whatever knows fear burns at the Man-Thing's touch--even the Man-Thing itself! "Burn," D'Spayre cries out, "I thrive on your pain!"

In Florida, at Shark Bay, Scott Summers (formerly of the X-Men) is getting a taste of civilian life by working on the trawler Arcadia. Its skipper is Aleytys Forrester, the only daughter of the aforementioned Jock.

At one point, Scott almost gets into a fight with another crewman who wants to look at Scott's glasses, which are the only things that hold back his mutant optic blasts. The fight is halted by the Captain, who steps in on Scott's behalf and cools things down. Later she and Scott go out to a tavern where Lee learns that her father had phoned with an urgent message.

At Prof. Charles Xavier's School For Gifted Youngsters, the X-Men are cleaning up the mess left in the wake of Kitty's battle with the N'Garai. Xavier summons The Angel and explains that the damages to the mansion, Danger Room and Blackbird aircraft are considerable. Warren offers to give the Prof. whatever money he needs. Xavier is grateful.

Down in the Danger Room, Kitty arrives with a plate of sandwiches and becomes the object of good natured jesting on the part of Wolverine and Nightcrawler who call her the "tiny teen terror" and mention that the damage will have to be subtracted from her allowance--which would only take about four or five centuries to pay off.

Colossus tries to say they're just joking, but Kitty is very sensitive about what happened and finally bursts into tears and runs from the mansion.

Nightcrawler pops up outside with her parka and tries to explain that he and Wolverine meant no harm, and are sorry. But Kitty is in a blue funk and just wants to be left alone for awhile.

Back at Shark Bay, Scott is invited to join in a game of pool. When no one is looking, he practices on the billiard balls with his optic beams.

Lee tells Scott that her dad needs her home and asks Scott to come with her, if he doesn't mind. Scott agrees and thinks about the very obvious fact that Lee is attracted to him, and how he should respond because he doesn't want to get involved with anyone yet.

They arrive at her father's home, which is a mansion on the edge of the Everglades. When she runs up to her father to embrace him, he turns into D'Spayre who states that her father killed himself that morning, and then backhands her, knocking her over the railing. Scott catches her, but before they can escape, D'Spayre warps reality around them and changes the house into a massive tower which radiates despair. Then D'Spayre laughs and Scott is momentarily blinded, only to open his eyes and find himself aboard the aircraft with his brother and parents on the flight taken when Scott was

a child and his parents were lost in the plane crash. When that hallucination fades, he finds himself alongside Alex, fighting the Sentinels. This fades to be replaced by Scott being with Jean Grey, and then appearing in a church to marry her when she is Dark Phoenix. As the wedding ceremony ends, Jean lifts Scott's visor and is blasted by his optic beams. Finally despair drives him to try to kill himself.

Back to normal, he sits up on the grass and sees the Man-Thing lumbering towards him. His first impulse is to destroy it until his training takes over. He never uses his optic beams on anything which has not attacked him first. The Man-Thing walks past and into the lair of D'Spayre, but Scott doesn't know whether it's after the demon or Lee.

Switching to his costume and visor, Scott follows, particularly when he hears Lee scream. D'Spayre attacks the Man-Thing again while Cyclops attacks D'Spayre with his beams. But the demon is unaffected. Then it disappears, leaving the Man-Thing burning. Scott tries to think of something which will make him feel despair, and as the demon reappears, he attacks it physically, grabbing it in a running tackle. Scott no longer feels fear and D'Spayre's powers don't affect him. Then Man-Thing attacks, reflecting Scott's courage and repelling D'Spayre's power. Scott rescues Lee while Man-Thing causes D'Spayre to burst into flames.

Scott puts Lee on the airboat and leaves, not looking back. By morning all that remains is the smoldering ruins of the mansion, and the living, victorious Man-Thing.

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This is the first issue without the influence of John Byrne, and while the story continues plot threads begun in the previous issue, it reads like a fill-in. It was almost as though someone had said, 'let's guest-star Man-Thing in the **X-MEN**'. Usually such guest-appearances happen to help focus attention on the character's own title, or else just to use a character to preserve the copyright to it. In fact, if it wasn't for the brief sequence with the X-Men (which has nothing to do with the main plot), this would read as an issue of **Marvel Team-Up** featuring Cyclops and the Man-Thing.

Although Cyclops officially quit the X-Men in issue 138, it's evident from this issue that not only will Scott not fade from sight the way that some of the old X-Men did after issue #94, but that we'll be keeping close track of him. Subsequent issues prove this to be true. In the sequence with the X-Men, we see them cleaning up after the havoc wrought when a monster from another dimension tried to trap Kitty Pryde in the last issue. Wolverine and Nightcrawler are once again shown to be friends, in spite of Logan's attempt to attack Kurt in the previous story. Once again, I speculate that that was John Byrne's view of Wolverine rather than Claremont's. Claremont feels he has certain proprietary rights over the character; Byrne originally wanted to take Wolverine out of the **X-Men** and put him in **Alpha Flight** when he started that title, but Claremont wanted to keep him in the **X-Men**. The only time Wolverine appeared in Byrne's run of **Alpha Flight** was in a dream sequence!

"The lingering effect of Dark Phoenix is portrayed in this story when she appears in one of Scott Summer's halucinations..."

The lingering effect of Dark Phoenix is portrayed in this story when she appears in one of Scott Summer's hallucinations. This would not be the last time that Scott would be haunted by the memory of Dark Phoenix. When she again returns, it will be cover-featured so that fans will have to check in to see whether Dark Phoenix has really returned.

Kitty Pryde acts oddly in this story, getting upset when Wolverine and Nightcrawler poke innocent fun at her for all of the damage caused by the N'Garai. We don't quite understand why she should be so sensitive since she didn't cause any of the damage herself--a monster did.

XMEN#145 "Kidnapped!"

Writer: Chris Claremont
Artists: Dave Cockrum & Joe Rubenstein
Colorist: Glynis Wein
Editor: Louise Jones

At the Lincoln Center in Manhattan, Storm arrives with Stevie Hunter, Kitty's dance teacher. As they are sitting in a private box watching the performance, Arcade's servant, Miss Locke, enters and touches the two women on the shoulder. When Ororo realizes who she is, she attacks her with a mini-hurricane. But then suddenly Stevie collapses. Miss Locke had injected the two women with a fast-acting poison so that they couldn't prevent her escape after she'd had her say. Arcade has been captured by Dr. Doom as the result of a business disagreement and Miss Locke wants the X-Men's help. To insure that, Miss Locke has captured the closest friends and relatives of the X-Men. Storm blacks out but awakens later, having apparently been given the antidote by Miss Locke before she left. But now Stevie is gone as well. Storm starts checking around and confirms that the kidnappings Miss Locke took claim for have indeed taken place. Ororo contacts her fellow X-Men and they discuss strategy.

The Beast offers to contact the Avengers for their help but Xavier wants to keep it "in the family" for the time being. What Hank McCoy does provide are the files the Avengers have on Dr. Doom.

Wolverine is against being forced to rescue Arcade. He believes they should raid Murderworld to rescue their friends and insure that no one will ever try to get to the X-Men this way again by making the price of such a move too high for them.

Storm agrees that they can't abandon their friends and has an alternate plan to Wolverine's.

In a remote corner of the American southwest is the simple dwelling of Alex Summers (Havoc) and Lorna Dane (Polaris). They are repairing their power generating windmill when Xavier contacts them and insists that it is urgent that they help the X-Men. Polaris at first resists, but finally she and Havoc agree, realizing that the need must indeed be desperate.

Xavier also summons Bobby Drake (Iceman) to come to the mansion, stating that he'll explain when he gets there.

Sean Cassidy (Banshee) is on his way to New York to tell Charles that Moira's been kidnapped. Xavier contacts him telepathically in the aircraft and explains that a car will be awaiting him.

Xavier has also been trying to contact Scott Summers, but he is weakened from summoning the others, plus he detects subtle atmospheric interference that he believes can be traced to Magneto, but that problem will have to wait until later.

Scott is lying on a beach at the moment, but not sunning himself. He's been washed ashore apparently after an accident. His glasses are missing so when he awakens he blindfolds himself to keep his optic blasts from running wild. Lee comes running up to him, explaining that they were separated by the storm and are on one of the islands in the Bahamas. Help could be close by, or they could be stranded for quite awhile.

The X-Men (old and new) are assembled at the mansion. Havoc suggests they work out in the Danger Room to loosen up, until it's explained to him why that isn't possible.

Kitty Pryde, still recovering from her battle with the N'Garai, has to remain behind while the X-Men leave on their mission. The X-Men leave in the Blackbird aircraft while the former X-Men remain behind to carry out another stage of the plan.

The destination of the X-Men is a castle a hundred miles to the north, where Dr. Doom holds Arcade prisoner. Until recently it was an amusement park run by the X-Men's former foe (now reformed), The Toad.

Storm appears in the castle, demanding to speak to the master. Some of the guards start de-

manding that she leave, until the master appears to state that he'll make that decision.

Dr. Doom asks Storm to state her business and she says that she wants Arcade, alive and unhurt. Doom offers to discuss the matter over a meal.

Meanwhile, the other X-Men start finding their own way into the castle. They make it inside the castle before encountering soldiers in battlesuits which were originally designed to take on the Fantastic Four.

Storm is having a lavish banquet with Dr. Doom, and although she finds him fascinating, she doesn't forget that she is there to keep him occupied while the X-Men attempt to free Arcade. Doom is fully aware of the X-Men's penetration into the castle, but doesn't admit this to Storm.

The X-Men defeat all of the warriors in battlesuits except for one, and he chooses to flee rather than fight any more. Doom frowns at this. He doesn't like it that one of his own lackeys should fear the X-Men more than he fears Doom.

Dr. Doom chooses then to introduce his other guest--Arcade. Seeing that Arcade is a guest, not a prisoner, Storm realizes that she's been duped and attacks Doom with a lightning bolt. Doom fights back and imprisons Storm in a sheath of metal which covers her body from head to toe.

Then the X-Men burst into the room and Doom defeats them just as easily, even Colossus whom he paralyzes. Dr. Doom has defeated and trapped the X-Men.

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Arcade, Arcade, how do I hate thee, let me count the ways. The only thing that makes this story work is Dr. Doom because alone, Arcade is a relentlessly dull and silly villain. Only in his scenes with Doom is he interesting because of the incredible counterpoint he is to the grim ex-monarch of Latveria (this story take place at the time that Doom had been deposed and was a man without a country).

The concept of superheroes being attacked by having their loved ones kidnapped is an old one which is nonetheless seldom explored. Most superheroes tend to operate independently of any family ties and people close to them are seldom endangered by their line of work. Wolverine is quite right when he states that they shouldn't give in to extortion and should make the kidnappers realize what a mistake they made. His arguments are similar to what we hear regarding giving in to terrorist demands where hostages will be exchanged for prisoners. If you give in once, where will it ever end?

Strangely, Kitty Pryde doesn't join in the mission because she's apparently still recovering from the battle with the N'Garai. Either that or she's just feeling under the weather because in #144 we saw Kitty and she was in fine shape, if a little oversensitive and depressed.

Dave Cockrum joined the **X-Men** as penciller with this issue, or rejoined would be more accurate because he was the regular artist on the new **X-Men** from #94 to 107 (minus fill-ins). The inking by Joe Rubenstein (misspelled "Rubinstein" on the credits page) is less than exciting and detracts from the art. He makes all of the X-Men look like teenagers and in her one panel appearance, Kitty Pryde looks like she's ten years old, rather than 13!

"Arcade, Arcade, how do I hate thee, let me count the ways..."

Dr. Doom certainly looks regal and imposing enough, though, and we do believe it when he defeats the X-Men single-handed. He's that kind of guy.

This issue once more shows Havoc and Polaris living the life of comfortable hermits in the American southwest. They want to be as far away from the hectic, frightening lives they knew as the X-Men as they can and resent it at first when Charles Xavier summons them. But they realize that Xavier knows of their wishes and that he wouldn't contact them if the need wasn't urgent.

A brief reference is made by Xavier regarding Magneto. It will be a few issues before the meaning of what Xavier has detected comes clear, and that story will be far more than just another encounter with Magneto.

The cover of this issue lacks any obscuring blurbs because the image says it all. A great cover.

To this day, John Byrne remains the artist most identified with the **X-Men**, even moreso than Jack Kirby who was at the title's creative helm in 1963. The work that Byrne did on the **X-Men** from issue 108, 109 and 111-143 forms an artistic cornerstone against which all subsequent artists continue to be measured.

The splash page of #129 shows the X-Men dwarfed by the wing of the Blackbird while the illumination from the plane reflects from the water puddled up on the tarmac and in turn bathes the X-Men in a soft glow. Although the figures in the panel are not very large, they're rendered with great detail. Too often today, when an artist knows that a figure will be reduced to a size that small, they skip details, figuring they won't matter. But they do matter and this scene shows how that extra work pays off handsomely. The coloration by Bob Sharen tries to create the effect of people at night in reflected light, so no colors are apparent outside of the lamblent glow from the Blackbird's landing light. The color effect is achieved with subtle sweens of yellow and orange to achieve a golden look. Even the shadows around the figures capture the genuine feel of nighttime. This panel shows how important it is when the penciler, inker and colorist all work in tandem to achieve maximum effect. It's nice to see this much work extended on a panel that's not an action scene.

Page 3 demonstrates a good grasp of storytelling as the scenes switch from the interior of the Blackbird, to the exterior, to the exterior of another aircraft and then the interior of that aircraft to point out the contrast between the spartan interior of the Blackbird and the decadent opulance of Jason Wyngarde's jet.

The Hellfire Club was still new and mysterious at this point and that aspect is evident in the way that the ruling council remains cloaked in shadow.

In #130, the Dazzler is introduced and much is done with diffused light effects. When Scott and Jean enter the nightclub on page 3, Byrne achieves just the right effect of lights illuminating a smoky room with figures barely glimpsed through the haze in the background. His inside joke of including The Joker at the top of page 5 is one of those throwaway gags which works when not belabored, as the character is only glimpsed in the one panel.

Byrne seems to have gotten a kick out of drawing Jean Grey as The Black Queen. When she's introduced on page 15, it's in a panel which is tilted just the way the camera would be tilted in the old ***Batman*** tv show whenever villains were shown. It's an interesting effect.

The splash page of issue 131 is quite dramatic as it shows a bedraggled Kitty Pryde running through an alley while the headlights of some vehicle bear menacingly down on her. That one panel puts us

right in the middle of the story by showing that she's obviously been running and hiding for what must have been hours and has been pushed through more than any child should be expected to stand up to. The fire escape and the building lights behind her are rendered in an effect which recalls the work of Bernard Krigstein to create the impression of a detached background and the frenzy of the scene.

In this issue Byrne displays the real physical (if not emotional) grasp he had on Wolverine. While he may have viewed the character as being a bit more unthinkingly brutal than Claremont does, his visual presentation of every facet of the character is the best, bar none. Byrne drew Wolverine as just what he is, a middleaged man. And when Wolverine is bereft of his uniform, such as he is in issue #131, he portrays Logan as being particularly hairy (and Austin inked every one of those little body hairs). Logan seems much more a human being for this since the vast majority of comic book characters are portrayed as having no body hair at all when they are depicted as bare-legged or shirtless. This advance can be compared to when Barry Smith started drawing male characters with nipples, a physical facet heretofore forgotten in the comic book fantasyland of the ideal physique. The battle between Phoenix and the White Queen, although occupying only three panels (on pages 22 & 23) demonstrates why Byrne would have such a fascination with the character. With the character's "phoenix effect", her colorful garb and long, scarlet tresses, she is the most beautiful super-heroine in comics, and any artist would revel in the visual possibilities the character offers to them.

Most comic artists tend to be fans of old movies because of their colorful nature and the fact that movies are closer in creative thrust to comics than comics are to anything in the print medium. A good comic book reads like a film and the characters and events turn and move with each dynamic movement of the story and twist of perspective performed by the artist. So it's not unusual that a director of stunning, visual force such as Orson Welles would have his likeness turn up on one of the characters in a comic book story. In this case he is Harry Leland (a crossing of names from two Welles' film characters) on page 22, panel 6.

Wolverine has never looked more savage than in the last panel of issue 132. There he is, up to his armpits in sewer water, covered with muck, the skeleton shadow of a grate falling across him as he sneers out of the darkness and vows awful retribution. This image is what formed much of what fans think of when Wolverine is mentioned today.

Wolverine explodes in #133 and we see the kind of solo foray that readers had been dreaming of for a long time. And yet as smooth and powerful as that action art is, one of the best panels is on page 6 when Byrne is able to create a fearful expression so well that the reader can per-

THE JOHN BYRNE X-MEN PART 2

by James Van Hise

"To this day, John Byrne remains the artist most identified with the X-Men, even moreso than Jack Kirby, who was at the title's creative helm in 1963..."

ceive it on a character who is masked except for eye and mouth. One could say Byrne "cheats" a little in that the mask is so skin tight that he's able to sneak in some expression lines, including a furrowed brow.

Byrne portrays Jean as radiantly beautiful in her guise as the Black Queen, even though evil dominates her. The incongruity of Jean wearing a spiked collar (page 10, panel 4) works to very good effect. Coupled with her very revealing bodice, she looks like she bought her garb off the rack at a shop specializing in bondage attire. WHIPS-R-US, perhaps?

A good example of how comic art creates a fluid, cinematic motion is presented on the bottom of page 22 in #134. Beginning with a closeup of Phoenix (or Dark Phoenix, as later events would reveal) it cuts to a closeup of a terrified Jason Wyngarde, then an extreme closeup of Wyngarde, then a closeup just of Wyngarde's eye, which pans to an image of Wyngarde's ethereal soul at one with the universe before flowing back again on page 23 to another closeup of his eye, back to an extreme closeup and finally to a medium shot of Mastermind (Wyngarde), driven catatonic by the experience. In a few panels we go through it all and see it the way we would a film. *That* is what comics are all about.

John Byrne lets loose in portraying the wonder and the horror that is Dark Phoenix in #135. The gracefulness of the phoenix effect as pictured on page 11 in which a flamebird fills the sky is beautiful in its simplicity. As Dark Phoenix, we see Jean Grey portrayed as someone whose face is twisted in evil ecstasy, as though in the grip of some orgasm of malefic delight. Byrne portrays the cosmos as something naked and defenseless against the onslaught of this mad witch. Dark Phoenix hungers for power on a level which seems sexual in its intensity.

The yin-yang, the terrible duality of her power in which she is both attracted and repelled by its innermost yearnings is particularly well depicted in #136, on pages 10 & 11, when we see Jean Grey go through moods which begin upon her return to Earth where she at first appears flushed with delight, then becalmed and then aroused into fury. The fact that only Cyclops is able to penetrate this ecstasy of power comes across as one object of desire replacing another, in which companionship dominates the will for power until that power is aroused by anger from Xavier's attack (pages 22 & 23). The symbolism of Phoenix left naked when the power of Dark Phoenix is completely shackled takes on new meanings in this context.

The climax of the Dark Phoenix saga in #137 features some of Byrne's most affective panel art. It's difficult to choose which page is the more carefully rendered, although a panel such as the first glimpse of the "blue area" on the Moon (page 17) is certainly a good bet. The battleground on the Moon is portrayed as a murky maze of tunnels and unearthly ruins of ancient structures. When the end draws near, we can almost see it in Jean's eyes (page 44, panel 2) as she explains that she finally understands that she is two beings in one, and that each needs the other to survive. It's an exaggeration of the old adage that a person is a balance of their good and bad sides, each working on the other, but in this case the two sides are both supremely powerful and are pulling her apart as first one, and then the other side gains supremacy. Byrne captures those conflicting feelings in Jean quite well as she prepares for suicide.

What can you say about #138? It was a hastily done fill-in issue and doesn't tell a story so much as it presents highlights from 1963 to 1980. Only occasionally does the art rise about the serviceable, such as the panel of The Angel carrying the body of Prof. X, or the recap of the Dark Phoenix and Proteus saga.

But Byrne is back at the top of his form in #139, which leads off with a dynamic splash page of The Angel dodging thin cylinders which is almost 3-D in effect, and quite well done. If that isn't enough, we turn the page to an excellent double-page drawing of The Angel and the X-Men in the Danger Room which shows how Byrne really excels at drawing large figures whereas other artists often find large figures difficult to work with when it comes to detailing perspective. This story, which features the Wendigo, features some of Byrne's favorite characters—Alpha Flight:and Wolverine. The art is some of his best and features lots of interesting little bits, such as Nightcrawler's hair standing on end when he's frightened (I know, an old bit but on Nightcrawler it works!) and the tryptich on the second to last page of the story when we see Kurt unloading the car as viewed through the Inhuman eyes of The Wendigo. The last page in which we see the creature completely dwarfing Nightcrawler is quite powerful and is the stuff that good cliff-hanger scenes are made of.

The art remains at its peak in the concluding installment of the Wendigo meets Alpha Flight saga in #140 and it's a bit difficult to decide which page is better. A lot of emotional punch is generated by Byrne's visuals in the Snowbird/white wolverine versus Wendigo battle. Byrne draws the face of the

transformed Snowbird only in shadow with only glowing eyes and white teeth showing, somewhat reminiscent of Frank Frazetta's "Track of the Beast" in Warren Publications' **Creepy** #1. What also cannot be overlooked is the incredibly strange and detailed aircraft rendered at the conclusion of the story which is only glimpsed clearly in one panel! It looks as though a lot of time was spent on the design and it looks more like an aircraft from the year 2020 than it does like anything remotely similar to what is flying around today.

Byrne's cover to **X-Men** #141 remains the single best cover in the series. It is dramatic and eye-catching while being far different from the norm. Seeing wanted posters for the X-Men with banners marked "SLAIN" covering several members makes you want to read this story immediately, and neither Byrne nor Claremont let the reader down. The "Days of Future Past" title worked into the side of the building on the splash page adds to the feeling being established by this image—a sensation of despair and loss. The story is filled with images which are both eerie and disturbing, such as Kate walking through the cemetery filled with headstones marking the deaths of so many heroes. The Sentinels have always been grim harbingers of destruction and that has never been captured better than Byrne does here. The panel on page 19, when Sentinels surprise Wolverine and the others sneaking through the sewer at night, is a classic!

The conclusion in #142 is no less good even though much of the visual dynamics are confined to the X-Men versus the new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants in 1980. But it's Byrne's images of the dark future of 2013 (with panels done in thick borders to clearly differentiate the continuity from the 1980 sequence) that take the prize. The death of Wolverine at the hands of the Sentinels is no less shocking because it was already portrayed on the cover. This is the ultimate X-Men conflict and Byrne draws it that way. It was the second to the last issue of the **X-Men** that Byrne drew; he left the series when he was giving it his finest work ever.

Byrne's final **X-Men** outing, "Demon," is extremely well drawn but is more of a lark, an excursion into horror in which John gets to render his own version of ***Alien***. Once Kitty confronts the monster on page 12, it's a relentless chase in which Byrne's alien tears down walls and trashes everything in its path. Rather than coming across as someone's last issue on a series, where one might expect energy levels running low, it has all of the artistic enthusiasm of someone tackling a title for the first time. The frightening aspect of the creature is used to fine effect time after time as Byrne draws it at angles meant to heighten the horrific appearance of the thing. On page 15 it suddenly bursts on the scene after having seemingly been led astray. I don't think a more frightening-looking monster has been seen in comics in years. Even in silhouette in panel one of page 19 it is a horror on the loose. When it is finally incinerated on page 26, its smoky outline caught in the fiery jets of the Blackbird, Byrne makes us feel the heat with his rendering. But the heat and passion leave with that issue and, for awhile, what followed could only suffer by comparison.

"Byrne portrays Jean as radiantly beautiful in her guise as the Black Queen, even though evil dominates her..."

Byrne realized what Claremont wanted to do with the X-Men and added a good share of his own creative expertise as well. No artist has ever been as important to the **X-Men** as Byrne was during his tenure; his legacy aptly demonstrates why it will be a very long time before anyone comes along who handles the characters as well, or who will stick with them for as long.

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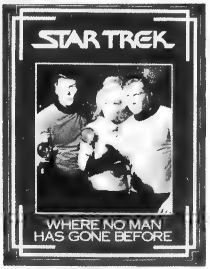

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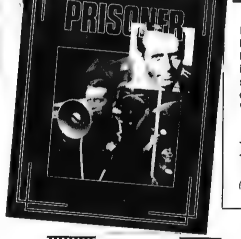

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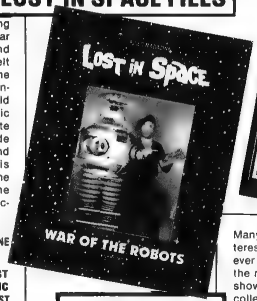

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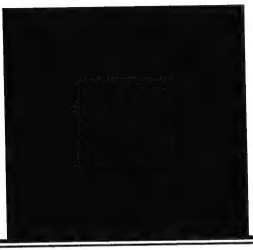

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